

מגילת אסתר

THE megillah

THE BOOK OF ESTHER / A NEW TRANSLATION WITH A COMMENTARY
ANTHOLOGIZED FROM TALMUDIC, MIDRASHIC AND RABBINIC SOURCES.



ויהי בימי אחשורוש הוא אחשורוש
המלך מהרו ויעד כוילי יבעל ויששים ונאה
מדינה כימים ההם כישבת המלך אחשורוש
על כסא מלכותו אשר בשושן הבירה בשנת שלוש
הכלבו יעשה בשרה לכל שריו וזכריו חיל פרס וכדי
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על גילי סקף ועבורי שיש מטות זהב וכסף על רצפת
בתם ושיט ודר וכחת והשקות בכלי זהב וכסף
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למלך אחשורוש ביום השביעי כטוב לב המלך בין
אמר לברוכי בותא חרבוניא בנהא ואבגתא יד
וכרס שביתה הסריסים הבישרתים אה פנ המלך
אחשורוש להביא את ושרי המלכה לפנ המלך
בכתר בלכות להראות הימים והישרים את יפה כי
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General Editors

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מעלת אסת

Translated and compiled by

Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz

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by

Rabbi Nosson Scherman

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הרב מאיר ב"ר יחזקאל צדוק ז"ל

שנקטם בדמי ימיו

ג' טבת, תשל"ו

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והיה ירע אהוב אהב את המקום

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משמח את המקום

משמח את הבריות

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הרב הגאון ר' אהרן זלאטאוויץ שליט"א

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הרב אהרן זלאטאוויץ
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מאד ילמחא לבי לבי הי"ע והחבוב הרב מאיר יצחק שילא
לתדורר בלבו לחבר פינוס מיליט מעברי בנותינא האטאליע
ואחורניע וצמחבונגים לחבש בצצמא בצצה לוח בלשון אנגליה
על מילת אסתר. בלח ויהיה מלא אורה ויהיה ראוי
להיות קדוש לדורות, ורקוב יודוהו סכר, ויהיה לכי
אתו הרב טוב ואולרסר, וצבנתן צומדת "צד"
ויודא בבבובל, יל ברורה (בובא) בל
במצאן בבליאליה בורר את העולמית היתר טובים
וצרובים ומעלים. רבוב יברכהו בצד צבובות
הקלורה עם חכמה ומבול.
ויהי נאם ה' אלנו יל בל הי"ע לעלה
בבבובל צד "לחבוב" תורה ויהא בורה
ואם נפגל נאמר בלום אב מצוב דלכל אומר לו
ציל ציין באמאן סלחובין בל ה' יל נגב בורר סינן זקנאן מהלל
בפה נולד כנה מן החכם לכא' ללח' לו קברה. יל אחת כנה
וכנה הבא ללח צד אלכא גילוי מילתא בלחאן וצוד גילוי לו
הסכמה מלחאן היבבור ב' מלה פיוסלין גילויא.
והלל מדיק אלה בל מחבור לבי בהצלה מילדה ונח
לח להבין והלוח ימלא כל מלחאליהו. ונצבה בלל לחאליה
בהרחה קל צמחה ובגאולתה גילוי מילח צבנא בהרחה בומאן אלה.

אחרי זלאטאוויץ החופשי
מלה ומבוב וצד הרבאץ בבובל יל
יסל/לילאן דילא דר הנבאץ פארצות הדורות וקל/י

Preface to the Second Edition

When the first edition of the ArtScroll Megillas Esther was written, the enthusiastic reception it was to receive was not anticipated and there was surely no expectation of a second edition. The response of the Torah public was such that this memorial to a dear friend became the first publication in a series that will *אמרה* embrace the Prophets and Writings as well as other of our holy books. To have gained entree into thousands of Jewish homes and to have become a conduit of Torah wisdom to tens of thousands of Jews is a privilege, of course — but it also imposes an awesome responsibility to be worthy of the trust and expectations of those who have given this series such wide acceptance.

As in the prefaces to *Eichah* and *Koheles*, in addition to setting forth what the series attempts to do, we feel that it is essential to make clear what it is not designed to do.

Much of our Torah knowledge is afflicted with a malady — rather than examine the Torah anew, with fresh eyes and more maturity as we grow older, we unfortunately remain with the simplified versions presented to us when we were children.

In this series, an attempt is made to cull the enormous treasury of Torah thought that has been untapped by most people and, by so doing, reveal some of Torah's riches to those for whom it is Israel's most precious possession. At the same time, we are quick to point out that whatever has been offered is but a sampler. We urge our readers to use both the Overview and the Commentary as source material and as springboards to further and deeper study of their own.

גל עיני ואביטה נפלאות מתורתך
Open my eyes that I may behold wonders
from Your Torah (Psalms 119:17)

The wonders are in Torah. We deem ourselves privileged to have helped open eyes to behold them.

The Editors

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Preface

It is with mixed feelings of joy and sadness that this volume is presented to the public.

□ Sadness — because it was undertaken לעילוי נשמת הרב מאיר ב"ר יחזקאל צדוק ע"ה in memory of my very intimate and dear friend Rabbi Mair Fogel ע"ה, who was tragically cut off from this world on א יום יב"ח Pearl, and beloved mother Anna as his only surviving immediate family. 7 טבת, תשל"ו, December 7, 1975 — leaving his dear wife Pearl, and

I wanted desperately to perpetuate his noble memory in some meaningful form, and, on the night following his funeral, I undertook to compile this anthology of commentaries on Megillas Esther. My hope was to embark on a work which could be completed within the "sh'loshim," and at the same time make a serious and needed contribution to the Torah public. There was absolutely nothing of this scope available on the Book of Esther for the tradition-seeking reader, and with around-the-clock-work, the task could be completed within the thirty day-"shloshim" goal.

□ Joy — because it has become evident that a significant contribution has been made to the English-speaking audience: A lucid, literate anthology of commentaries, based entirely on Talmudic, Midrashic, and Rabbinic sources, on what is probably the most familiar book of the Bible — but is nevertheless little understood in the light of our Sages who dwelt upon every letter of the text and elucidated its innermost meanings. Working through many nights, my goal was to delve deep enough to fathom the true meaning of Megillas Esther as understood by our Sages, and to attempt to present it to the English-reading audience in a palatable and readable manner.

The Commentary thus conceived was bound to appeal to a large cross-section of people from the early-teenage day school student to the Hebrew teacher; from the college student seeking a traditional interpretation of a book of the Bible to the housewife; from the 'uninitiated' adult reader with limited Hebrew background to the young kollel scholar who has neither access to all the sources in their original, nor the time to investigate them individually. This, of course, encompasses a very wide range of background and ability; the completed book is, I hope, one that bridges the gap and fills the unique individual needs of each reader.

The primary goal was to provide a free-flowing 'running commentary' to the text, removing first the 'surface difficulties.' It became immediately obvious that the standard JPS translation — which very often is at odds with the Talmudic translation of the Hebrew — simply would not do. A free-flowing, lucid, and literate translation in consonance with the interpretation of our Sages was absolutely essential to ensure the readability of the book and its faithfulness to the outlook of our Torah sages. The new translation eliminated many of the 'surface difficulties' dealt with by Rashi and Ibn Ezra because their interpretations were incorporated within the translation.

The Gemara and Midrashim were then consulted, and virtually every Chazal directly concerned with פסוק — the literal and intended meaning of the text, which could be meaningfully incorporated into the framework of an English-language commentary was included.

The classic commentaries — Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and Alschich — were then culled for essential comments not suggested in the translation or quoted in the Talmudic sources.

Next, the major commentaries were consulted: primarily the M'nos Halevi, by Rav Shlomo Alkabetz, Yosef Lekach by Rav Eliezer haRofe, the recently reprinted commentary of Rav Elisha Galico, the Vilna Gaon; the all-encompassing Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, and the commentary of the Malbim. [An extensive bibliography — with brief biographical descriptions of the authorities consulted — has been added to the back of the volume.]

The problem was not finding material on the Megillah: it was limiting the vast material to that which would provide the best 'running commentary' within the scope of the work. I hope that the resulting volume does justice both to the Gaonim who have been cited and to the reader.

It must be made clear that this is not a so-called 'scientific' or 'apologetic' commentary on the Megillah. That area has, unfortunately, been too well-covered, resulting in violence to the Jewish faith as well as to correct interpretation. It is in no way the intention of this book to demonstrate the legitimacy or historicity of Esther or Mordechai to non-believers or doubters. Belief in the authenticity of every book of the Torah is basic to Jewish faith, and we proceed from there. It comes as no surprise to me — nor should it to any Orthodox Jew — that the palace in Shushan, as unearthed by archaeologists, bears out the description of the palace in the Megillah in every detail; nor do we deem it necessary to prove, by means of the 'Persian borrow-words,' nor by whatever means, that the Book was, indeed, written in that contemporary period.

Rather, the aim was a specifically traditional commentary reflecting the Megillah as understood by Chazal. No non-Jewish sources have even been consulted, much less quoted. I consider it offensive that the Torah should need authentication from the secular or so-called 'scientific' sources. The sources of every excerpt has been documented. Whenever the author has

inserted a comment of his own, it is inserted in brackets.

To add to the appeal of this book among Yeshivah students, much use has been made of Hebrew within the commentary. All such Hebrew references are vocalized and translated for the benefit of those less fluent in the language.

The transliteration of the Hebrew words posed a problem: Sephardi or Ashkenazi? It was decided that the pronunciation most acceptable to most readers was a cross between the Ashkenazi and Sefardi — Ashkenazi consonants, so to speak, with Sephardi vowels. Words that have become generally accepted, such as 'Ahasuerus' were not changed to conform to the above method of transliteration. Although there are several inconsistencies, in general the style has been held throughout the work.

The moment of bidding farewell to this book is indeed nostalgic and solemn. It marks the conclusion of a delightful quest, of many hours spent in intimate contact with חז"ל, our Sages, and their profound insight into every facet of Torah study.

I am deeply grateful for the frequent and inspiring sessions spent with my good friend, RABBI NOSSON SCHERMAN, throughout the compilation of this work. Reb Nosson has given of himself beyond every reasonable expectation; he was kind enough to further cramp his busy schedule to read, amend, research, expand and edit my manuscript. He put his scholarly mark on the book, and lent it the benefit of his erudition and flowing style. His very association with this work has raised its level beyond description. Appreciating the need for such a work, he also consented to write the most beautiful Introduction. I take this opportunity to express to him my warm and sincere thanks. Our association has taught me more than I can put into words.

Similarly, I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to my colleague at ArtScroll and חבר נאמן, REB SHEAH BRANDER for providing the initial impetus in this project. His tireless efforts in seeing the graphics through every stage of production — with editing and constant changes — and his constant availability as a sounding-board for much of the material, provided a continuous source of inspiration. My wishes — often unreasonable, I fear — have had his sympathetic consideration and unyielding response.

Reb Nosson and Reb Sheah could have produced this work without me, but I could not have produced it without them.

To a considerable extent, this work was inspired by REBBETZIN MEYER FELDBRAND. She, with the assistance of her husband, a distinguished talmid chacham, prepared a manuscript in English that was an anthology of commentaries. The work in its original form was not publishable. It was mutually agreed that her project would be dropped and that I would attempt a new anthology with a different emphasis dedicated to the memory of Reb Mair Fogel ע"ה. Rebbetzin Feldbrand is to be commended, however, for her concept. It is hoped that this woman of considerable ability will find new vehicles to make her sensitivity and talent available to the Torah public.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

And now, as I lay down my pen, it is my pleasant duty to express deep feelings of gratitude to the many friends who have given of themselves so nobly and offered such precious help:

First, my father HARAV ARON ZLOTOWITZ—"אֲשֶׁר מִיָּמֵינוּ אָנִי שׂוֹתֵה" for giving of his profound and phenomenal scholarship and for his constant advice and guidance. May he and my dear mother תח"י, be rewarded with אַרְכִּיכוֹת יָמִים וְשָׁנִים מְתוֹךְ בְּרִיּוֹת גּוֹפָא וְנִהוּרָא מְעֻלָּא.

I owe a great debt of gratitude to my dear friend, MR. DAVID H. SCHWARTZ who responded to this project with great warmth and enthusiasm. He read the manuscript and made many practical suggestions which were incorporated into the work. I appreciate his constant concern and guidance.

RABBI JOSEPH ELIAS, who was kind enough to read and comment upon the manuscript of the first chapter in the initial stage of this work. His scholarly insights and friendly advice helped set the tone for the work as a whole, and his encouragement provided an important impetus. His encouragement and comments were of immeasurable benefit.

My very good friend, RABBI DAVID COHEN, from whom I learned in years gone by my first real lessons in research, and from whom I developed my great love for sefarim. He graciously took the time to read and comment on parts of the manuscript. He pointed out important concepts, made many stimulating suggestions, and provided insights from the spring of his original thought and phenomenal scholarship.

My long time friend, REB AVI SHULMAN, who shouldered the burden at ArtScroll during my involvement with this work and who, seeing the need for such a commentary, almost single-handedly ensured its dissemination on a broad scale.

RABBI NISSON WOLPIN, for making himself available during the formative stage of the work and for providing much encouragement and suggestions which helped shape the scope of the commentary and direction of the finished book.

Perhaps the single greatest 'ויִישָׁר בֶּח' is due to HARAV DAVID FEINSTEIN, who I am privileged to call רַבִּי אֱלֹהֵי וּמִיִּירָעִי. He has read and commented upon nearly every selection. He graciously took time out from his busy schedule to read the manuscript on a daily basis and allowed me to benefit from the abundant storehouse of his learning. He removed stumbling blocks and guided me to interpretations I might otherwise have misunderstood. Most of all, he graciously gave me the gift of time, which cannot be repaid.

The responsibility, however, for what is included in, and what has been omitted from this book, is entirely mine. All the above were good enough to leave the final redaction of the book wholly to me. They are therefore absolved from any responsibility for errors or shortcomings in that which follows; such are completely my own.

I feel indebted to MRS. JUDY GROSSMAN for generously giving of her personal time to proof read the manuscript through its evolving stages of editing. She took it upon herself — within the short span of time allowed — to help ensure the accuracy of the final product. Many errors would have passed through uncorrected were it not for her keen eye.

MISS MIRIAM FLAM has been kind enough to assist in certain areas of research. In their capacities at ArtScroll, she, MISS MAZAL LANIADO and MISS PEARL EINHORN, have followed through the technical end of the publication in a most dedicated manner. They responded with great selflessness; their role is greatly appreciated.

My deepest gratitude is due my wife מנבי"ת RACHEL, who created the domestic atmosphere and inspiration conducive for Torah-study and for the compilation of such a work, and who graciously assisted in translating and proofreading. May ה'שי"ת grant us both that in the z'chus of Harbatzas Torah we may merit to see עוסקים בתורה ובמצות.

Every author has hopes for the work that represents a slice of his life, a part of his being. Especially for a work like this — one that is intended as a monument to a dear friend — one presents his book to the public with a tefillah that it fulfill its purpose. Its purpose is this:

To make accessible to the Torah public a Chazal's eye view of one of the twenty-four sacred books of *Tanach*; provide a glimpse of the treasure hidden in the depths of every verse of Torah; by so doing, to inspire others to open other parts of *Tanach* and find the treasures hidden there; what is more, to be a catalyst that will drive others to compile more and finer commentaries in our rich heritage of ספרי קדש — holy books; most of all, to help Torah hurdle the language barrier that has condemned so many thousands of English-speaking Jews to varying degrees of spiritual pauperdom.

An ambitious purpose, this. If but part of it is realized than the thousands of cumulative man-hours invested in this volume will have been justly rewarded.

Meir Zlotowitz

Brooklyn, New York, Tu b'Shevat, 5736

An Overview— The Period and the Miracle

אֶסְתֵּר מִן הַתּוֹרָה מִנִּין?
“וְאֲנֹכִי הִסְתַּר אֶסְתִּיר פָּנַי”

Where is there an allusion to Esther
in the Torah?

“And I will hide My face” (Deut. 31:18).

—Chullin 139b

פִּירֶשׁ״י . . . בְּיָמֵי אֶסְתֵּר יִהְיֶה הַסֵּתֶר פָּנִים

“... in the days of Esther
there will be a concealment
of the divine countenance” —Rashi.

אָמַר רַב שְׁמוּאֵל בַּר יְהוּדָה,
שְׁלָחָה לָהֶם אֶסְתֵּר לַחֲכָמִים, “קִבְּעוּנִי לְדוֹרוֹת.”
שְׁלָחוּ לָהּ, “קִנְיָאָה אֶת מַעֲוֶרְתָּ עֲלֵינוּ לְבֵין הָאוֹמוֹת?
שְׁלָחָה לָהֶם, כְּבָר כְּתוּבָה אָנִי עַל
דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים לְמַלְכֵי מְדִי וּפָרַס

Rav Shmuel bar Yehudah said,
Esther sent to the Sages, “establish me [the
festival marking my miracle] for all time.” They
sent back, “Do you seek to arouse the jealousy
of the nations against us?” She sent them, “I am
already inscribed in the royal chronicle of Media
and Persia” —Megillah 7a

The Historical Background

It is hard to imagine how the Divine countenance
could be concealed during a prophetic period; surely
the prophets would see it and reveal its grandeur!
In our confused times, many wonder how we will

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surely the prophets
would see it and
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know when משיח—the Messiah arrives — who will tell us? “If only we had a prophet — then we would know; then we would follow.”

There were still prophets during גלות בבל — the Babylonian exile. Even in its closing years, Daniel, Mordechai, Baruch ben Neriah, Ezra, Chaggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and more were still on the scene. Fifty-two years after the destruction of the Temple a prophecy was fulfilled. Cyrus, King of Persia, gave the order that the House of G-d be rebuilt in Jerusalem. The prophet Isaiah had foretold it about two hundred years before: אָמַר ה' לְמַשִּׁיחוֹ לְכוּרָשׁ — *So said G-d to His anointed, to Cyrus . . . לְמַעַן עֲבָדִי יַעֲקֹב וְיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּחִירִי — For the sake of Jacob my servant and Israel my chosen . . . הוּא יְבַנֶּה עִירִי וְגִלּוֹתִי — he shall build My city and he shall free My captives [Isaiah 45].*

It was two years before Ahasuerus became King and over four years before the opening scene of Megillas Esther. To the Jewish people, intensely familiar with the prophecies of Isaiah, the gesture of Cyrus should have been a signal to converge upon Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple that had been razed by Nebuchadnezzar. Indeed, they should have considered it a rare opportunity that they, not Cyrus, were given this privilege of rebuilding the House of G-d — according to Isaiah's prophecy, it was the Divine will that Cyrus, not the Jews, build the House of G-d and bring its children back to its holy environs. But Cyrus gave the privilege to the Jewish people. [Megillah 12a]

Prophecy Unheeded

*Cyrus, who wept
and groaned over
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destruction, became
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the ancient
prophecy*

Cyrus, who wept and groaned over the Temple's destruction [*Seder Eliyahu Rabba*, 19], became G-d's chosen instrument to fulfill the ancient prophecy and bring the glory of the Divine Presence back to the holy mountain where Abraham bound Isaac to the altar, where Jacob beheld the heavenly ladder, where David set his hopes, and where Solomon built the Temple of G-d. The righteous Persian monarch gave the order that the Jews might go home again — and only forty-two thousand heeded his call! Forty-two thousand heard the call of prophecy but millions stayed behind.

When G-d hides His face, such are the effects. Confusion, hesitation, fear. What does G-d want of us? Where and how are we to do His bidding? And what is His bidding?

Torah study was experiencing a renaissance in Babylon — but some of its outstanding sons were asking whether they, as a nation driven by its G-d from His land, still owed Him any more allegiance than a divorced woman driven from the home of her husband, or a freed slave sold away from the home of his master

This was the tapestry before which the actors in the Purim story entered the stage of history. The Jewish people were splintered and confused. Torah study was experiencing a renaissance in Babylon — but some of its outstanding sons were asking whether they, as a nation driven by its G-d from His land, still owed Him any more allegiance than a divorced woman driven from the home of her husband, or a freed slave sent away from the home of his master [*Sanhedrin 105a*]. A shocking question, one that can only be understood as one more saddening indication of the many veils behind which the Divine countenance was hidden.

Cyrus moved his royal capital to Shushan in the Land of Elam. With him went Mordechai and Daniel, but they were not able to teach Torah in Elam as they had, and their peers were still doing in the flowering academies of Babylon. Elam, the seat of royal power, the source of Jewish hope, was barren of Torah. More concealment of the Divine countenance.

Hope Extinguished

Despite the impression common among us that Ahasuerus was an amiable drunkard who was manipulated by Haman, the Sages make it very clear that he was thoroughly evil and that he hated the Jews even more than did Haman

The work on the Temple in Jerusalem proceeded under Cyrus despite the harassment of hostile nations surrounding Jerusalem. In the last months of his reign, Cyrus had a change of heart. He forbade additional Jews to cross the river to the Land of Israel. This setback caused the Jewish pioneers in Jerusalem to despair and halt the work they had begun so hopefully. But the rebuilding had not been outlawed, only hindered [*Shir Hashirim Rabba 5:4*].

The reign of Cyrus did not long endure. Only two years after he ordered the rebuilding of the Temple, Ahasuerus was king of the vast Persian Empire. The new king was no friend of the Jews. Despite the impression common among us that he was an amiable drunkard who was manipulated by Haman, the Sages make it very clear that he was thoroughly evil [*Megillah 11a*] and that he hated the Jews even more than did Haman [*Esther Rabba 4:12*]. His queen, Vashti, a granddaughter of Nebuchadnezzar,

fulminated furiously against the feeble attempts to rebuild the Temple and she insisted that Ahasuerus put an end to the holy task begun by Cyrus [*Esther Rabba* 5:2]. Finally, a vicious letter arrived from Jerusalem. It was written by enemies of the Jews — the sons of Haman prominent among them — and accused them of building the Temple as a prelude to rebellion. Ahasuerus was only too happy to accept the advice of his queen and the reports of his observers. He ordered an end to the work in Jerusalem [*Ezra* 4].

So another veil descended over the Divine countenance as it seemed plain that Isaiah's prophecy was not to be fulfilled. And if not, then perhaps, indeed, the Jewish people were no less adrift and alone than the wife and the slave driven from their former husband and master.

The Crucial Prophecy

There was another prophecy, more explicit and more imminent than Isaiah's, that was a source of confusion at best; and despair at worst:

כִּי כֹה אָמַר ה' כִּי לִפִּי מְלֹאֵת לִבְבִּל שְׁבַעִים שָׁנָה אֶפְקֹר
אֶתְכֶם וְהִקִּימְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם אֶת דְּבָרִי הַטּוֹב לְהָשִׁיב אֶתְכֶם
אֶל הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה

*For thus says the L-rd, that after seventy years
of Babylon are completed, I will remember you
and perform my good word concerning you to
make you return to this place*

[*Jeremiah* 29:10].

אֲנִי דָנִיֵּאל בִּינֹתִי בְּסִפְרִים מִסְפֵּר הַשָּׁנִים אֲשֶׁר הָיָה דָּבָר
ה' אֶל יִרְמְיָה הַנָּבִיא לְמַלְאוֹת לְחָרְבוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם
שְׁבַעִים שָׁנָה

*I, Daniel, considered in the books the number of
years whereof the word of the L-rd came to
Jeremiah the prophet that he would complete
seventy years of the ruins of Jerusalem*

[*Daniel* 9:2)].

Perplexities of Concealment

Was Cyrus' order the fulfillment of the prophecy? And if it was, how could it have been so easily nullified by Ahasuerus? Was the gracious gesture of Cyrus a Divine invitation to the Jews to demonstrate their love of Jerusalem and, found wanting, were

they denied even the fragile beginning of a redemption?

Another veil of concealment over the Divine countenance.

What happens when G-d's face is hidden? We no longer see His hand guiding history. The successes and failures of the Jewish people were historically dependent upon their allegiance to G-d and His Torah. Torah and Prophets are a series of pledges and warnings. When Jews were loyal to the dictates of their Creator, they were rewarded in this world as well as the next. And when they failed to heed His word, retribution was not long in coming. That was when G-d showed His face and His concern. When His countenance was concealed, Israel became subject to the whims of rulers, the mutations of nature and the vicissitudes of history. The smile of Cyrus seemed to matter more than the prophecy of Jeremiah, and the frown of Ahasuerus was more disastrous than the chastisements of Moses.

*The smile of Cyrus
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Moses.*

Who is Concealed?

אֵסְתֵּר מִן הַתּוֹרָה מִנֵּן

Where is there an allusion to Esther in the Torah?

On the surface, it seemed clear that it was G-d who had made Himself distant, but in reality, even the concealment was ordained by the Torah. It was the Jewish people that had created the distance between itself and its G-d. By neglecting its total dependence on G-d and its total belief in the supreme אֱלֹהֵי — I — אֱלֹהֵי ה' — I of the first commandment אֶלֶּלִיקָה — *I am the L-rd your G-d* — the Jews created the conditions that beclouded the Divine Image and allowed a barrier to conceal His countenance from them. But He was still there. It was the challenge of that confused, baffled, frightened generation to strip away the veils — or, better said, to recognize that it was He who gave existence to *all* the veils, that nature itself was but an illusory veil that could conceal Him only from those who were blind. That was the challenge. It was the greatness of Mordechai and Esther that they found Him for themselves and revealed Him to others, and, in so doing, illuminated every darkness down through the centuries [Maharsha, Chullin 139b].

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The Second Temple — A Dreaded Prophecy

Most of us have become indoctrinated with a non-Jewish, anti-Torah version of history. The existence or destruction of the Temple has been portrayed as a cultural sidelight to the existence of a Jewish nation-state. The Jerusalem awarded by Cyrus to his Jewish subjects consisted of only the city and its immediate environs, barely more than a dot on the world scene and surely of no greater significance than any casual amnesty of a kind-hearted ruler. Saturated as many of us have become with this version of history, we are thoroughly convinced that whatever importance the Holy Land possessed was primarily because it was the crossroads of three continents.

The authentic history of the period as seen through Torah eyes is far different. Jeremiah's prophecy hung like a sword over the heads of absolute monarchs. To them, the Temple was more than a building. It represented a philosophy of life that was dramatically opposed to theirs.

The authentic history of the period as seen through Torah eyes is far different. Jeremiah's prophecy hung like a sword over the heads of absolute monarchs. To them, the Temple was more than a building. It represented a philosophy of life that was dramatically opposed to theirs. The G-d of Israel was a power who had destroyed kings from Pharaoh to Sancherev. If His people were to be redeemed, then He could well lay low the masters, kings, and rulers of all lands as he had done whenever they menaced His people in past generations. When Haman sought to persuade Ahasuerus that the Jews could be exterminated with impunity, the Jew-hating king was reluctant.

"I am afraid that their G-d will do to me what He did to my predecessors," he argued.

Haman answered, "The Jews are sleeping. Because they no longer perform *mitzvos* as they once did, they do not merit heavenly intercession" [*Megillah* 13b.]

Haman and Ahasuerus saw more clearly than did the Jews. They, too, saw the veils of concealment, but the two plotters knew that the darkness was not imposed from on high; it was a reflection of Jewish attitudes below.

Monarchies Haunted

Monarchs lived in fear, but they also lived with hope—the hope that the destruction of the Temple marked the end of G-d's ascendancy or that the Jewish lethargy had allowed the bonds between them and G-d to slip apart. And the magic number was seventy.

He did something that not even his brazen grandfather had dared do; he took out the sacred vessels of the Temple and used them in his wild, drunken revelry.

For more than a generation, Jeremiah's prophecy haunted monarchs and their advisors. The L-rd of Hosts said that Babylon would be ascendant for seventy years and that the ruins of Jerusalem would rot for seventy years. If the prophecy were to come true, crowns would topple and empires crumble. As long as the prophecy was pending, kings avoided gross acts of disrespect toward G-d lest they provoke His anger. They lived in fear, but they also lived with hope—the hope that the destruction of the Temple marked the end of G-d's ascendancy י"ז or that the Jewish lethargy had allowed the bonds between them and G-d to slip apart. And the magic number was seventy. If seventy years went by without fulfillment of Jeremeiah's prophecy, then Jerusalem would forever remain a plowed field and a haven only to foxes.

Belshazzar, grandson of and successor to the throne of Nebuchadnezzar, watched the days go by with trepidation as the end of year number seventy grew closer. Jeremiah's prophecy was well known and well respected: *after seventy years of Babylon are completed*. The then current Babylonian Empire was founded by Nebuchadnezzar in the year 3318 (442 BCE). He reigned for forty-five years and was succeeded by his son, Evil Merodach, who reigned for another twenty-three. Balshazzar saw the months go by until he entered the third year of his reign. The seventy years were over! He rejoiced, but he was not content to be merely joyous; he had to show his contempt of the G-d whose power he no longer feared.

Belshazzar prepared the wild, orgiastic feast that has become legendary in the literature of excess. To celebrate, he did something that not even his brazen grandfather had dared do; he took out the sacred vessels of the Temple and used them in his wild, drunken revelry. And why not? Jeremiah was wrong. Babylon had survived his deadline and Jerusalem was not being rebuilt. But Belshazzar was wrong. By morning he was dead [*Megillah 11b*].

The arithmetic of the seventy years will be discussed later. For the moment, however, let us take note that no Babylonian king, even after the razing of Jerusalem, dared use its holy vessels. They knew full

well that, though Judea was but a minor province in the world of *realpolitik*, it was a major spiritual force.

The prophecy was real, and if it came true, punishments too terrible to be contemplated would be visited upon the monarch who dared profane the holy vessels.

The Seat of Power Moves

Belshazzar's audacity was brutally punished that very night as he was murdered by Darius, the Mede, and his son-in-law, Cyrus, the Persian. Darius offered the throne to Cyrus, but the younger man demurred because Daniel had prophesied that the kingdom of Babylon would pass first to Media and then to Persia [*Yalkut Shimoni, Esther, 1049*]. So it was that a prophecy decided the highest of all affairs of state — the identity of the monarch and the seat of world dominion. Both reigns were brief — Darius' lasted a year and Cyrus' for less than three. In 3392, (368 BCE) Ahasuerus assumed the throne of the Persian Empire in the capital city of Shushan.

*Belshazzar
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— and bloodily — in
his computation;
Ahasuerus was
determined to do
better.*

He, too, kept one eye on the calendar. Seventy years — when would they end? Belshazzar blundered miserably — and bloodily — in his computation; Ahasuerus was determined to do better. According to his calculation, the seventy years ended with the third year of his reign. He celebrated with the fabulous 180-day feast with which *Megillah Esther* begins. And he, too, as an arrogant symbol of his new-found security from the Jeremiah prophecy, did something he had never dared do up to then — he profaned the sacred vessels of the Temple [*Megillah 11b*]. His calculation, too, was wrong, but he was spared from immediate retribution because G-d's plan called for Ahasuerus to become sire of the man who would finally bring fulfillment to the words of the prophets.

Anything — Except . . .

Nine years later, Esther came to plead for her people and Ahasuerus made his famous magnanimous gesture that she might make any request up to half the kingdom and it would be fulfilled. The Talmud (*Ibid*) says he that told her she might request anything *שְׁחֹצֵץ דָּבָר לְמַלְכוּת* — except for something that will interfere with the stability of the

kingdom, וּמָאִי נִיהוּ, בְּנֵן בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ, — and what is this thing? The building of the Holy Temple. Let us not forget that at that time, Ahasuerus had no idea that his queen was a Jewess, nor had she ever given him any reason to think that the half-finished, long-neglected Temple was of any interest to her. Nevertheless, when he made an offer as generous as any husband has ever made to a distraught wife, he felt it necessary to caution her that in all the world there was one request that he could not grant because it would irreparably disrupt the stability of his kingdom — the Temple must not be rebuilt.

There was one request that he could not grant because it would irreparably disrupt the stability of his kingdom — the Temple must not be rebuilt.

Because the study of history has always been of negligible importance in the world of Torah scholarship, the field has been forfeited to the "historians" who have all too often become its distorters.

Thus, it should be absolutely clear that, despite the fact that only forty-two thousand Jews had returned "home," the Holy City and Holy Land were very much on the minds of all rulers. In a broader sense, this should point up another vital realization. Because the study of history has always been of negligible importance in the world of Torah scholarship, the field has been forfeited to the "historians" who have all too often become its distorters. The three examples cited above throw a new light on one aspect of the period that is not found in the history books. We may justly say that the current world-view is a massive veil of concealment that obscures our vision of all too much.

The Mysterious Seventy Years

As mentioned above, Jeremiah spoke of seventy years of Babylon before the Jews would be remembered by G-d, and Daniel spoke of seventy years from the destruction of Jerusalem. As we have seen, the kings of the period dreaded the climax of the seventy years and each in turn attempted to determine when they would end. The following table gives some of the main dates and events of the period and shows which were crucial to the "seventy" and

The kings of the period dreaded the climax of the seventy years and each in turn attempted to determine when they would end

which were extraneous. [The material is taken from Rabbi Joseph D. Epstein's excellent work, *Otzar Ha'iggeres*, a masterful compilation of halacha, aggada, history, and ethical thought on Purim and the Megillah. See *Otzar Ha'iggeres* p. 149 for a far more extensive table of relevant dates and events.]

THE YEAR THE EVENT

- 3318 Nebuchadnezzar assumes the throne of Babylon
- 3319 Nebuchadnezzar conquers King Yehoyakim of Judea. The Jewish land becomes a vassal state of Babylon.
- 3327 Nebuchadnezzar exiles King Yechaniah of Judea together with the leading scholars.
- 3338 Nebuchadnezzar destroys the Temple and exiles the Jewish nation.
- 3389 Belshazzar, dating the "seventy" from the accession to the throne of Nebuchadnezzar, celebrates and dies. He interprets "seventy years of Babylon" as a reference to the reigning dynasty.
- 3390 Cyrus orders the construction of the Temple. It is, indeed, seventy years since the first stage of the exile, the conquest of Judea. G-d has "remembered" Jerusalem as promised to Jeremiah, but not yet redeemed it.
- 3392 Ahasuerus becomes king and orders the cessation of construction of the Temple.
- 3394 Ahasuerus, in the third year of his reign, concludes that seventy years, dating from Yechaniah's exile, have ended. Although only 67 calendar years have elapsed, Ahasuerus follows the ancient custom of counting a fraction of a royal year as a full year. [For a detailed explanation, see Megillah 11b and *Otzar Ha'iggeres*].
- 3406 Ahasuerus dies and is succeeded by Darius, son of Esther.
- 3408 Darius orders that construction of the Temple begin again. It is seventy years since the destruction of Jerusalem.

Interpretation of Prophecy

At first glance, the varying interpretations of the mysterious seventy years may seem strange. Didn't the prophet convey the exact meaning of his words? Didn't the Torah sages understand?

The prophet understands what G-d wants him to understand and conveys what G-d wants him to convey. The present exile will end one day — that it will is one of Maimonides' Thirteen Principles that are the very basis of Jewish belief. When that day comes, the redeemed Jewish nation will understand the true meaning of the many prophecies dealing with exile and redemption. We will then understand how the prophets foretold the conditions of the exile and the deliverance from it, but their words will remain murky and obscure until then. It was never G-d's purpose to give us a history book in reverse, clearly outlining the exact course of all future events. Often, the prophet himself may not understand the full import of the Heavenly words conveyed through his lips.

The classic example is the prophet Jonah. His prophecy was *וְנִינְהָ נְהֻפְכָּת* — *and Nineveh will be overturned*. To him it was clear that he was foretelling the destruction of the great city. Nineveh would be overturned just as Sodom and Gomorrah were overturned. When the population repented and was spared, Jonah thought that he would be branded a false prophet. But Jonah did not know the true meaning of his own prophecy [*Sanhedrin 89b*]. Nineveh was *indeed* overturned, but in the moral, ethical, and religious sense. The prophetic words "*Nineveh will be overturned*" contained both potential meanings: without repentance, it would be literally overturned and destroyed; with repentance it would be spiritually overturned and saved [*Derech Hashem, III 4:7*].

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The Ambiguous 400 Years

One of the pivotal prophecies of Jewish history was the declaration to Abraham *כִּי גֵר יִהְיֶה זְרַעְךָ*

בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא לָהֶם וְעָבְדוּם וְעָנּוּ אֹתָם אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה — *Your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years.* [Gen. 15:13]

When would the four hundred years begin? Would there be a full four hundred years of slavery? Would the entire period be spent in one land?

Not until the Exodus ... was it clear that G-d in His mercy, dated the 400 years from the birth of Isaac rather than some later date

It was not until the Exodus that these questions were answered. Not until the Jews were freed exactly four hundred years after the birth of Isaac was it clear that G-d, in His mercy, dated the four hundred years from the birth of Isaac rather than from some later date [Vilna Gaon on Haggadah of Pesach]. Until then, no one could say that the first seventy-five years of Isaac's life — years that he spent together with his father, Abraham — would be considered part of the exile despite the incongruity of the fact that, although it may have been considered "exile" for Isaac, the exalted status of Abraham was such that even among the idolators of Canaan, he was not considered a "stranger" in an alien land [Maharal, *Gevuros Hashem*, 10].

...and the Future Redemption

That Rabbi Akiva was mistaken about Bar Kochba in no way diminishes either his own greatness or the unimpeachable truths that still await fulfillment.

When G-d wants His people to understand His words clearly, He makes them known clearly. But countless prophecies, including those foretelling the coming of the Messiah, the ultimate redemption, and the end of days, were not meant to be explicitly clear. Therefore, a giant like Rabbi Akiva could be convinced that Bar Kochba was the Messiah and represented the fulfillment of G-d's ultimate plan of creation and the realization of all the prophetic pledges. That Rabbi Akiva was mistaken about Bar Kochba in no way diminishes either his own greatness or the unimpeachable truths that still await fulfillment [Mishneh Torah, *Hilchos Melachim* 11:3]. Every Torah school child "knows" that G-d told Abraham of a four-hundred year exile that would begin with the birth of Isaac. But this knowledge did not become absolute and public until the Exodus actually took place. In the same way, future events will illuminate the apparent obscurities of the Torah like a flash of lightning.

Misplaced Mercy

The miracle of Purim was climaxed by another great victory over Amalek, and it was followed by a new acceptance of the Torah...

Amalek is the embodiment of evil on earth and the attack in the desert was but a symptom, and indication of an incurable spiritual malaise.

There are times when soft-headed mercy is nothing more than a euphemism for cruelty.

Only a few weeks after the Exodus, the Jews were attacked by Amalek. The prayers of Moses, the leadership of Joshua, and the faith of the Jews resulted in a great victory, a victory that was followed soon after by the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. The miracle of Purim was climaxed by another great victory over Amalek and it was followed by קִיּוֹם וְקִבְלוֹ, *they undertook and confirmed* [9:27] — which, as our Sages tell us, was a new acceptance of the Torah, one that was even more sweeping than that at Sinai. One of the three commandments required of Israel upon settling the land was the obliteration of Amalek [*Sanhedrin 20b*]. The commandment מְחָה תִּמְחָה אֶת זֵכֶר עֲמָלֵק — *you must blot out the memory of Amalek* — is still read annually in all Jewish congregations the Sabbath before Purim and it is a commandment that must be fulfilled before the final redemption can be accomplished.

Superficially it would appear that the commandment is an act of revenge for a vicious sneak attack that happened in the year 2448. The many comments of the Sages and later commentators make it abundantly clear, however, that Amalek is the very embodiment of evil on earth, and that the attack in the desert was but a symptom, and indication of an incurable spiritual malaise. It is for this reason that G-d says that neither His Name nor His throne can be complete until the seed of Amalek is wiped from the face of the earth [*Midrash Shocher Tov 9:10.*]

Mercy is a Jewish trait, so much so that our Sages question the Jewish ancestry of a cruel person. Nevertheless, there are times when softheaded mercy is nothing more than a euphemism for cruelty. The “kind” mother who indulges her child’s insatiable sweet tooth hardly deserves anyone’s sympathy while she cringes at the sound of the drill and her beloved’s screams as he sits in the hated dentist’s chair — she put him there. On the other hand, the

“cruel” mother who supervises her beloved’s eating habits earns temporary resentment when she snatches away gob upon gob of carbohydrates, but she will get a lifetime of gratitude for having raised a healthy child.

If someone had assassinated Hitler in 1933 (before assassination became ‘respectable’), we may be sure that statesmen and editorialists would have fulminated against bringing the barrel of a gun into the political process. With our 20-20 hindsight, we now know that such an assassination would have been an act of mercy unparalleled in human history.

Human concepts of right and wrong, mercy and cruelty, are of necessity limited by the overriding fact of our very humanity. The sensitive human being might well feel revulsion at the commandment to murder an Amalekite in cold blood — it flies in the face of everything he has been taught about the sanctity of life and the virtues of compassion. But compassion and weakness are not always synonymous. The source of goodness and mercy is G-d. When He, in His supreme wisdom, decrees that the war against Amalek is the road to human perfection, then that is the only true course of mercy. To let Hitler live, to let Stalin live, to let Torquemada live, to let Titus live . . . to let Amalek live is not mercy at all.

*To let Hitler live, to
let Stalin live, to let
Titus live ... to let
Amalek live is not
mercy at all*

Saul and Agag

*David was twenty-
eight years old when
Saul became king —
not a mere stripling
tending herds as
distorted history
would have us
believe ...*

As soon as Saul was anointed King of Israel, he was commanded to wage war against Amalek. He was no simple farmer’s son, the new king. He was head and shoulders above the rest of his people spiritually as well as physically. In his entire lifetime he committed but one sin [Yoma 22b]. David was twenty-eight years old when Saul became king — not a mere stripling tending herds as distorted history would have us believe — and still Saul was chosen over him as Israel’s finest son. In his great test, he was given the assignment of completing the task begun by Moses and Joshua 438 years earlier — to eradicate Amalek completely, even its livestock.

Saul said to himself, “If it is a calamity when even a single wayfarer dies, how tragic it would be to slaughter an entire nation! If the people have sinned, how have the livestock sinned? If the adults have

sinned, how have the children sinned?" Logical questions; we might well ask them today. A heavenly voice said to him, "אַל תְּהִי צַדִּיק הַרְבֵּה — *Do not be too righteous!*" [Koheles 7:16 *ibid*].

Saul, righteous Saul, fell into the trap that was to cost him his throne; He substituted his own concept of mercy for G-d's. He thought he would be more merciful than the merciful G-d!

He attacked Amalek and a victory took place, but not a total victory — the people and Saul both found the commandment more than they could fulfill. One man, above all, was spared. He was King Agag, malevolent and obsequious ruler of the evil nation. Because he was spared, he lived with his wife and she conceived. She survived and gave birth. Many generations later, a descendant of Agag, born because of Saul's misplaced mercy, entered the stage of Jewish history. His name was Haman. And, because of an act of human "mercy" in opposing G-d's absolute and ultimate mercy, the Jewish people was threatened with the same extinction that it should have visited upon Amalek [Megillah 13a].

Samuel the prophet was told by G-d that the monarchy would be stripped from Saul. The prophet sadly and angrily delivered the message to his anointed, and asked that Agag be brought to him. Unctuously, Agag came with gifts and thanks. Samuel himself slayed the Amalekite king. Samuel — not a man of battle, not a man who ever had blood on his hands—a man of peace and kindness and *genuine* mercy. He did not ask for a warrior or a professional executioner to deliver the *coup de grace*, because one does not entrust acts of mercy to others. And carrying out the *mitzvah* of eradicating Amalek, because it contributes to the perfection of G-d's Name, throne, and the redemption, is the ultimate act of mercy. [See I Samuel 16].

Many generations later, a descendant of Agag, born because of Saul's misplaced mercy, entered the stage of Jewish history. His name was Haman.

Samuel did not ask for a professional executioner to deliver the coup de grace, because one does not entrust acts of mercy to others.

David and Shim'i

The popular impression of David is that of a bloody conqueror king, unable to build the Holy Temple because he was a man of war, not of peace. The impression is typical of the shallow readings of Prophets of which most of us are guilty. David was truly a man of peace and mercy. The fallen of his

David was truly a man of peace and mercy. The fallen of his wars were like offerings on the Divine altar.

wars were like offerings on the Divine altar and he was not permitted to build the Temple because his people could not measure up to this level of purity and righteousness [Yalkut Shimoni II Samuel 145. See Michtav Me'eliyahu II p. 275].

When his son Absalom rebelled and drove David from Jerusalem, the exiled king was pelted with stones and bitter curses by Shim'i ben Gera, a prophet, teacher of Solomon, and unreconciled member of Saul's family. Shim'i, as a rebel against the person of the king, was liable to the death penalty [Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Melachim 3:8], and David's loyal followers led by Avishai ben Zruyah begged for permission to kill Shim'i:

לָמָּה יִקְלַל הַכֶּלֶב הַזֶּה אֶת אֲדֹנָי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲעֲבֶרָה נָא וְאֶסִּירָה אֶת רֹאשׁוֹ.

"Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and take off his head!"

David refused. Even in his hour of deepest anguish and hurt, his compassion did not desert him:

הִנְחוּ לוֹ וְיִקְלַל כִּי-אָמַר לוֹ ה', אוֹלֵי יִרְאֶה ה' בְּעֵינָי וְהָשִׁיב ה' לִי טוֹבָה תַּחַת קִלְלָתוֹ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה.

"... let him alone and let him curse; for G-d has bidden him. Perhaps G-d will look at my affliction and requite me good for his cursing this day." [II Samuel 16]

So Shim'i lived and had children thanks to David's mercy. One of his descendants was Mordechai!

So Shim'i lived and had children and descendants thanks to David's mercy. One of his descendants entered the center stage of Jewish history many generations later — his name was Mordechai!

Not for naught did the Jews of Esther's time say, "See what a Yehudi (of the tribe of Judah) did for me and what a Benjaminite caused me." What did a Yehudi do for me? — David did not kill Shim'i, and Mordechai was born of him. What did a Benjaminite cause me? — Saul did not kill Agag and Haman was born of him to oppress the Jews [Megillah 13a].

There are two kinds of mercy — the true kind that produced Mordechai and the false kind that produced Haman.

Saul Vindicated

But Saul was still a great and righteous man despite his lapse. The ways of G-d are mysterious; how mysterious, exacting and righteous they are we

can only sometimes begin to fathom and even then it often takes centuries and a perspective bordering on the superhuman.

G-d in His providence utilized David's mercy to Shim'i to produce Mordechai and Esther, two descendants of Saul's royal family. When the product of Saul's grievous sin terrorized the Jews of Persia and Media and gloated over their assured extermination, it was Mordechai and Esther carrying on where their ancestor had failed, arising to bring the Jews to repentance, arousing G-d's compassion for His children, and foiling Haman's plot.

We begin to peek behind the veils of concealment and see G-d's hand at work. We are not done; we will see more.

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Esther—A forlorn Wife

The poignancy of Esther's plight is almost certainly the most gripping part of the *Megillah* in purely personal terms. A Jewish girl hoping against hope not to become first lady of the world finds herself spending twelve months in an alien harem dedicated to the sole purpose of preparing for the king's pleasure. Then she is chosen queen and lives at the center of oriental intrigue and passion while guarding the secret of her origin and secretly holding fast to her religion.

According to our Sages, however, the personal suffering of Esther was even more acute. לקחה מִרְדֵּכָי לוֹ לְבַת, אֶל תְּקַרִי לְבַת אֵלָא לְבִית — *Mordechai took her to himself like a daughter* [*Megillas Esther* 2:7], do not read like a daughter, but like a "home" [meaning as a wife] [*Megillah* 13a]. Thus we have a married Jewess — who remained married to Mordechai all through her ordeal in the palace — simultaneously living with a gentile husband.

As a matter of fact, it was the very circumstance of her ordeal that convinced Mordechai that some higher Divine motive lay behind Esther's forced entry into Ahasuerus' grotesque, international beauty contest. Esther was a prophetess [*Megillah* 14a], a supremely righteous woman who, since she

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was married, should not even have been eligible for queenship according to the rules laid down by Ahasuerus' chamberlains. They violated their own rules by taking married women [see *Commentary* 2:17]. But Esther should have merited at least so minor a miracle that she should not stand out among the many hundreds of contestants. Instead, whoever saw her was captivated by her. Mordechai, a prophet possessed of the holy spirit in his own right, surely knew that a G-d-given חוט של חסד – thread of grace rested upon her enabling her to win the king's heart [ibid]. These were unmistakable indications to him that G-d wanted her in the palace for some higher purpose than merely being Ahasuerus' consort. So Esther remained brave and Mordechai bided his time.

We can feel the depth of her ordeal through her prayer and plaint to G-d as she prepared to break the law by appearing unbidden to beg Ahasuerus for the survival of her brethren:

"My G-d, my G-d, why have you forsaken me. Why have you changed the order of the world and the order of the Jewish mothers against me. Sarah was taken captive by Pharaoh for one night and he and his household were punished. I have been placed in the bosom of this evil man for so many years and no miracles have helped me. Jewish women have three special commandments and I keep them even here. Why have you forsaken me?" [Midrash *Shocher Tov* 22:26.]

Esther in Halachah

According to those who hold that Esther was married to Mordechai, her plight presents enormously complex halachic problems. She was involved in two sins – even though she was coerced – which every Jew must sacrifice his very life to avoid:

- 1) She was a married woman engaged in adultery, and
- 2) By living with Ahasuerus she caused a public חילול השם – desecration of the Name of G-d, also a sin that a Jew must give up life itself to avoid.

There is a third area of difficulty: a married woman who commits adultery is forbidden to her husband unless she was coerced. When Esther went to plead for her people, she went willingly, thus

becoming forbidden to her husband.

The main Talmudic sources on these questions are *Kesubos 3b* and *Sanhedrin 74b* where *Tosafos* and other commentators deal with these matters at length. We will offer no more than a few of their main trends of thought. Anyone seeking a full understanding of the matter should, of course, consult the primary sources. It goes without saying that nothing that follows should be used as a basis for halachic decision.

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Esther was never an active participant in either the sin of adultery or the sin of desecration at any time during her marriage to Ahasuerus [*Sanhedrin 74b*]. Her righteousness was of such magnitude that her initial revulsion at being forced to submit herself to the King was never in doubt, nor was there the slightest suspicion that it became eroded with the passage of time or the allures of palace life [*Tosefos, Kesubos 57b*]. An important element in any consideration of potential desecration of the Name *הַשֵּׁם הַקָּדוֹשׁ* is whether the non-Jew requiring the given act intends that the Jewish victim violate his religion [*Sanhedrin 74b*]. Ahasuerus was driven solely by passion; not knowing Esther was Jewish, he could have had no intention that she profane her religion. Even after she revealed her identity, Ahasuerus' desire to retain her as queen was purely a product of his love for her rather than as an intention to desecrate her religious beliefs. Until the fateful days when Esther voluntarily presented herself to Ahasuerus to pursue the salvation of her people, Mordechai had no doubts about her status as his wife. Then, she feared [see *Commentary 4:16*] that Mordechai might suspect her of acting the temptress and no longer wish to remain her husband despite the compelling circumstances under which she acted [see *Shitah Mekubetzes, Kesubos 3b*].

The Veils Part

The history of the Jewish people up to the Babylonian Exile is replete with miracles. In virtually every generation, a Jew could reinforce his

Reliance on miracles, even undue emphasis on miracles, can actually dilute belief because it can make one forget that the hand of G-d is as present in what, for lack of a better name, we refer to as "nature."

The Hebrew word for the world, עולם, comes from a root that means "hidden," for, in this world, the existence of G-d is hidden. He places us in an עולם — world of hiddenness and expects us to find our way to the truth.

belief through miracles which he had seen himself or tales of such miracles from first person witnesses. A visit to the Holy Temple was, in itself, an opportunity to see the active hand of G-d [Avos 5:8]. True, Jewish belief is not based on miracles; belief must feed on deeper roots. Miracles can be rationalized, explained away or misinterpreted [Mishneh Torah, Yesode Hatorah 8]. But there is more. Reliance on miracles, even undue emphasis on miracles, can actually dilute belief because it can make one forget that the hand of G-d is as present in what, for lack of a better name, we refer to as "nature" as it was at the Splitting of the Yam Suf when the Jews left Egypt. It is not simply a pretty turn of phrase when we thank G-d in Shmone Esrai for עֲמֻנו יוֹם שְׁבָכָל — the miracles that are done with us every day. Life exists because G-d makes it exist constantly; without His life-giving activity, the universe would cease to exist.

To the extent that that early history of the Jews is a chain of miracles and Divine intervention, it is itself a veiled picture of G-d. The very emphasis on G-d's miraculous activity can make one forget that His guidance is everywhere. The Hebrew word for the world, עולם, comes from a root that means "hidden," for, in this world, the existence of G-d is hidden. People may pray three times a day and observe mitzvos scrupulously, yet they are convinced that their business, professional, or military success is based on hard work, education, capital investment, superior strength, better planning, etc., etc., etc. Isn't G-d at least an equal partner in their success? Of course, but He is a silent and unseen partner, so silent and unseen that His very participation can be questioned.

This is the purpose of עולם — world-hiddenness — to test man to find truth in the murkiness. The non-believer will always find bases for doubt and blasphemy. The נבול (Deluge) took place in the year 1656 after creation, so the builders of the tower of Babel had a theory: every 1656 years, the foundations of the universe tremble causing a flood; we are safe until then. Pharaoh explained away the plagues in a similar way. Belshazzar arrived at a computation on which to base his blasphemy. And so down

through the ages. G-d does not drill faith into our minds and hearts; He places us in an עולם — world of hiddenness and expects us to find our way to the truth because He has given us enough tools — just enough, barely enough — to find the truth *if we really want to find it*.

The period of openly revealed miracles ended with Esther and Mordechai. A new emphasis was added to Jewish history. We had to find G-d's hand not in the splitting sea or heavenly fire, but in everyday events [See *R'sisei Loylo*, chapter 56].

G-d's Jigsaw Puzzle

Haman was enraged and sought vengeance against the entire Jewish people. Why? The reason was obvious: Mordechai refused to bow down to Haman. Quixotic Mordechai refused to acknowledge the King's Viceroy with the obeisance that was common protocol in the Orient, the same obeisance that Jacob paid Esau without a royal edict ordering him to do so. The *real* reason for the sword over Jewish heads was that the Jews allowed themselves to enjoy the feast of Ahasuerus despite Mordechai's insistence that they refrain from going. But the feast was in the *third* year of Ahasuerus' reign and the decree of extermination was in the *twelfth* year. How could there be a connection? Simple logic cried out that Mordechai was wrong!

Then the pieces of G-d's jigsaw puzzle began coming together. Suddenly widely separate links began to move together to form a chain and widely separated chains joined to become the anchor upon which Jewish survival was secured. And simple logic turned out to be wrong; quixotic Mordechai was right.

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One set of links: Ahasuerus' feast would become the undoing of the Jews later on, but first it resulted in the execution of Vashti which led to the coronation of Esther. Because Esther was Queen, she was in a position to approach the King to save her people and lull Haman into complacency by inviting him to her private banquet.

Another set of links: Bigsan and Teresh plotted to kill Ahasuerus. Because Esther secured a royal promotion for Mordechai he was positioned to

overhear them and report the scheme to Esther. She told the King of Mordechai's loyalty. It was inscribed in the royal chronicle there to lay forgotten until the fateful night when G-d disturbed the sleep of the King.

Another set of links: The King promoted Haman and everyone was required to bow to the newly risen Agagite. Mordechai refused to bow. Haman, assured of his power and influence — even with the Queen! — built a gallows and came to seek royal permission to hang Mordechai just when Ahasuerus learned that it was Mordechai who had once saved his life.

When the appropriate climactic time arrived, G-d's pieces came together and formed the destruction of Haman and most of Amalek, and salvation for the Jews.

G-d's Absent Name

G-d's Name does not appear in the *Megillah* — the only one of the twenty-four sacred books where such a phenomenon occurs. True, commentators show how the word **הַמֶּלֶךְ** — the King, is always a reference to G-d, King of the Universe and His name appears occasionally in acrostic form [see *Commentary* 5:4]. Nevertheless, these hidden appearances of His name are still in marked contrast to the rest of *Tanach*.

Precisely. The miracle of Purim happened at the end of the Babylonian Exile, a time when G-d was behind myriad veils of concealment, a time when Jews were asking with poignant, tragic sincerity whether they owed Him more allegiance than a wife spurned or a slave set free. And the miracle happened in Elam, a spiritually forlorn province, almost devoid of Torah.

Yet it was at that time and in that place that "random" links began coming together and forming chains of salvation, chains eternally binding the Jews to the earlier days when G-d was everywhere. The miracle of Purim showed them that G-d was *still*

everywhere, would always be everywhere, even when His presence could be divined only in the actions of this king or that, in acrostics of random events, in bafflements of history that, to the believing eye, spell out **אֲנִי רִאשׁוֹן וְאֲנִי אַחֲרוֹן וּמִבְּלַעֲרֵי אֵין אֱלֹקִים** — *I am the first and I am the last; and beside me there is no G-d* [Isaiah 44:6].

“Establish Me”

Esther asked the Sages to establish Purim as a festival for all generations [see *Talmudic quote at beginning of Introduction*]. The Sages refused on the grounds that, to do so, would inspire the jealousy and enmity of non-Jews. To which she responded that the story was *already* inscribed in the royal annals of Persia and Media.

To proclaim a festival and inscribe the tale in a sacred book would indicate that the chain of coincidental events leading up to the salvation was an open, obvious miracle. This, the Sages said, could not be done. The Jews were still under the dominion of the Persian Empire and its rulers would not respond kindly to a Jewish claim that G-dly intervention had been employed to best the highest officials of the empire.

Esther replied that such fears were groundless. The story is already inscribed in the royal annals, she countered. It is universally recognized that a miracle took place. There are simply too many coincidences and they fit together too well. Even the Persians and Medes recognized that G-d had taken a hand — albeit a gloved, concealed hand — in the events. The links came together too well for it to be anything else [Resisei Laylah Chapter 56].

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The Heavenly Reign

Of the ten **סְפִירוֹת** — emanations of Kabbalah, the last is **מְלָכּוּת** — kingship. The king, as ruler of the nation, represents the public manifestation of authority and government. He may have ministers and advisers whose counsel and machinations help determine the course of events, but it is the king who is the only, ultimate symbol of government. Nowadays, for example, a chief of state is higher in the order of protocol than a head of government. A prime minister may wield effective power, but he

does so in the name of the state; and the state is represented by the person of the king or president. The state is embodied in him.

In the Heavenly order, מַלְכוּת — kingship represents the final stage of G-d's will, His revelation on earth. It is the culmination of a lengthy chain of events resulting in His revelation.

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Nowhere more than in *Megillas Esther* is this revealed. In the *Megillah*, G-d's name does not appear, but when all was done, His presence was recognized everywhere. Every piece fit, His jigsaw puzzle was perfect. And Esther could truthfully tell the Sages that everyone knew it. Everyone realized that G-d rules the affairs of man — directly as He had in Egypt, the desert, or the Land of Israel; or from the concealment of nature and coincidence as He had in Shushan. Because He does not appear in the *Megillah*, He is there more meaningfully than in any other sacred book. It is in the *Megillah* that we see מַלְכוּת — kingship, the final emanation of G-d's infinite wisdom and power as it is manifested in the apparently mundane affairs of this planet. [*ibid*]

This may be the deeper reason why G-d is alluded to in the *Megillah* by the word הַמֶּלֶךְ — *The King*. It is in the guise of temporal, natural rule of earth that His essence is represented most truly.

No, He is not concealed. He only seems to be. It is for us to find Him in every event in our lives. *Megillas Esther* shows us how if we but read its directions.

Rabbi Nosson Scherman

לזכר נשמת אנשים נאמנים לה' ולתורתו
שנדרו לפה וזכו להרבות האור ולדחות החשך
אבי מורי ר' אברהם דוב ב"ר שמואל נטע שערמאן ע"ה
א' דשבועות תשכ"א
ורעיתו הכבודה
אמי מורתי ליבא בת ר' זאב ע"ה
ו' שבט תשכ"ט
מורי חמי החבר אפרים בן הר"ר רפאל גוגענהיים ע"ה
א' דר"ח תמוז תש"ך
תנצב"ה.

מגילת אסתר

א **אסתר**
פרק א
א"ד ב
וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ הָיָא אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ
הַמֶּלֶךְ מְהֻדוּ וְעַד-כוּשׁ שֶׁבַע וְעֶשְׂרִים
וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה: בַּיּוֹמִים הָאֵלֶּם כָּשְׁבַתְהוּ הַמֶּלֶךְ
אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ עַל כִּסֵּא מַלְכוּתוֹ אֲשֶׁר
ג בְּשׁוֹשָׁן הַבִּירָה: בִּשְׁנַת שְׁלוֹשׁ לְמָלְכוֹ
עָשָׂה מִשְׁתֵּה לְכָל-שָׂרָיו וְעַבְדָּיו חֵיל
פָּרָס וּמְדֵי הַפָּרָתָמִים וְשָׂרֵי הַמְּדִינֹת
ד לְפָנָיו: בִּהְרָאתוֹ אֶת-עֶשֶׂר כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ

י"א ר' במקץ

1. *In the days of Ahasuerus, successor to Cyrus, toward the end of the 70 years of the Babylonian exile. [4th Century B.C.E.] (Rashi).*

הַמֶּלֶךְ — *Who reigned.* Rav said: He elevated himself to the throne. Some interpret this to his credit, holding that no one else was equally qualified for the throne. Others say that he was not deserving of the throne, but that he owed his status to his vast wealth and lavish distribution of money with which he purchased his royal position, thus giving him dominion over the whole world (*Meg. 11b*).

מְהֻדוּ וְעַד-כוּשׁ — *From Hodu to Cush.* i.e. the whole world. [The Sages differ as to the actual location of these two countries] *Meg. 11a*).

Hodu to Cush. [usually translated 'India to Ethiopia.']

שֶׁבַע וְעֶשְׂרִים וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה — *One hundred and twenty-seven provinces.* Rabbi Akiva was once giving a lecture when he noticed that his students were drowsing. In order to rouse them he asked, "Why was it seen fit that Esther should rule over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces? Because thus said

G-d: Let the daughter of Sarah who lived one hundred and twenty-seven years come and reign over one hundred twenty-seven provinces" (*Midrash*).

Why would these words alert the drowsing students more than the topic of the day? Rabbi Akiva wanted to impress upon his students the importance of time and the duty to use every second to best advantage. It was because Sarah's one hundred and twenty-seven years were perfect and completely sin-free that her granddaughter could hold sway over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces. Each second meant a family; each minute, a farm; each day, a village. Had Sarah idled away her time, Esther's kingdom would have been diminished. Time is too precious to waste. Sarah's time well-spent was rewarded during Esther's reign. Each of us, too, is presented with the fleeting gift of time—and the mission of utilizing it fully and well. Who can say what the rewards will be for each minute well-spent; or the penalty for each minute wasted?

This admonition brought Rabbi Akiva's students to attention (*Chidushei HaRim*).

[Please note: The source of every excerpt has been documented. Whenever the author has inserted a comment of his own, it is framed in square brackets.]

¹ And it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus—the Ahasuerus who reigned from Hodu to Cush over a hundred and twenty-seven provinces— ² that in those days, when King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne which was in Shushan the capitol, ³ in the third year of his reign, he made a feast for all his officials and his servants; the army of Persia and Media, the nobles and officials of the provinces being present; ⁴ when he displayed the riches of his glorious

2. כִּשְׁבֶּת הַמֶּלֶךְ — When the king sat. i.e. 'sat securely.' He was a usurper to the throne and he wasn't securely established until after three years of political insecurity (*Rashi*).

בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה — Shushan the Capitol This was the palace compound which was surrounded by the less fortified עִיר שׁוּשַׁן, the residential part of Shushan where the Jews lived. [The capitol was separated from the city by a river.] Many citizens—including Mordechai [2:5]—as well as the King and his officers lived in the capitol. (See Ibn Ezra on 8:15, 9:12; *M'nos Halevi* on 8:14, 15; *Rav Yonasan Eybeschuetz* on 4:17; *Malbim* on 9:13; *Torah T'mimah* on 4:17).

3. בִּשְׁנַת שְׁלוֹשׁ — In the third year. 3395 from Creation (*Seder Ha-doros*).

It was the third anniversary of his ascension to the throne. He celebrated this anniversary with an annual feast, but in this third year, he had multiple cause for celebration:

According to his (erroneous) calculation, the seventieth year of the Jews' exile had passed thus belying the prophets who had foretold the exile's end after seventy

years [see *Meg.* 11b], and Ahasuerus rejoiced in this frustration of Jewish hope; he had completed the building of his magnificent throne; he was finally secure in his reign; he took Vashti as his queen. Thus the causes for such a lavish feast (*Midrash; Ibn Ezra*).

פֶּרְס וּמְדִי — Persia and Media. The Persians and Medes were two peoples of the same racial stock who jointly established a vast empire. They made a stipulation with one another saying: 'If we supply the kings, you will supply the governors, and if you supply the kings we will supply the governors' (*Meg.* 12a).

Ahasuerus was a Persian, therefore Persia is mentioned first. However, at the end of the *Megillah* (10:2), Media is mentioned first because the *Chronicles*, referred to there, were begun when Darius, the Mede, was king (*Me'am Loez*).

הַפָּרָתִים — The nobles. Royal descendants. It is uncertain whether this word is Hebrew or Persian, because it appears nowhere else except for the Books of Daniel and Esther (*Ibn Ezra*).

4. אֶת-עֶשֶׂר כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ — The

וְאֶת־יָקָר תַּפְאֶרֶת גְּדוּלָּתוֹ יָמִים רַבִּים
שְׁמוֹנִים וּמֵאָת יוֹם: וּבִמְלֹאוֹת הַיָּמִים
הָאֵלֶּה עָשָׂה הַמֶּלֶךְ לְכָל־הָעַם הַנִּמְצָאִים
בְּשׁוֹשַׁן הַבִּירָה לְמַגְדוֹל וְעַד־קֶטֶן מִשְׁתָּה
שִׁבְעַת יָמִים בַּחֲצֵר גִּנַּת בֵּיתֵן הַמֶּלֶךְ:
חֹרֶן|כֶּרֶפֶס וּתְכֵלֶת אָחוֹז בַּחֲבִל־כּוּץ
וְאַרְגָּמָן עַל־גְּלִילִי כֶסֶף וְעַמּוּדֵי שֵׁשׁ
מְטוֹת|זָהָב וְכֶסֶף עַל רִצְפַת בְּהִטּוֹשׁ
וְדָר וְסַחֲרָת: וְהַשְׁקוֹת בְּכִלֵּי זָהָב וְכִלִּים

יח' רבתי ו

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riches of his glorious kingdom. His intention was to dazzle his subjects with his great wealth so that they would loyally support his reign; subjects delight in an independently wealthy monarch. Also, he did not display the riches he confiscated from the people—those they would recognize. Rather, he displayed his own *personal* wealth (*Me'am Loez*).

The splendor of his excellent majesty. He adorned himself with כְּהוֹנָה — the Jewish priestly robes. The word *splendor*, used here is the same word used in connection with the priestly garments: לְכָבוֹד וְלִתְפָאֶרֶת, *for glory and splendor* (*Exodus 28:2*), thus indicating that he wore the robes looted from the Jews during the conquest by Nebuchadnezzar (*Meg. 12a*).

A hundred and eighty days. The last day was as lavish as the first (*Midrash*).

Our sages have told us that Nebuchadnezzar had one thousand and eighty different treasures which were buried in the bed of the river Euphrates. G-d revealed this hiding place to Cyrus, predecessor of

Ahasuerus, as a reward for having given orders to rebuild the Temple. Ahasuerus inherited this fortune from him and he displayed the inheritance to the guests at this party. The Midrash tells us that he showed them six treasures a day as is symbolized by the six superlatives mentioned in the previous verse: עֲשָׂר, riches; כְּבוֹד, glory; מְלָכוּתוֹ, kingdom; יָקָר, splendor; תְּפָאֶרֶת, excellence; גְּדוּלָּתוֹ, majesty. At this pace, it took him exactly one hundred and eighty days to go through all his wealth, for 180×6 equals 1,080 (*Vilna Gaon*).

5. — *And when these days were fulfilled.* Rav and Shmuel differed in their interpretation. One said it was clever of him to invite his distant subjects first, because he could win the loyalty of the Shushanites whenever he wished. The other held that he was foolish; he should have entertained the inhabitants of his own city first so that, in case of a rebellion by outsiders, they would support him (*Meg. 12a*).

The Talmud asks: "Why did the Jews of that generation deserve ex-

kingdom and the splendor of his excellent majesty for many days—a hundred and eighty days. ⁵ And when these days were fulfilled, the King made a week-long feast for all the people who were present in Shushan the capitol, great and small alike, in the court of the garden of the King's palace. ⁶ There were hangings of white, fine cotton, and blue, held with cords of fine linen and purple, upon silver rods and marble pillars; the couches of gold and silver were on a pavement of green and white, and shell and onyx marble. ⁷ The drinks were served in gold goblets—no two goblets

termination? Because they derived pleasure [נִהֲנוּ] from the feast of that wicked one (Ahasuerus)". The Talmud doesn't say "because they ate" — this the Jews could possibly justify by claiming they were subject to royal intimidation and were afraid not to eat. Rather the sin was that they *enjoyed* themselves and partook of the festivities (*Pirchei L'vanon*).

הַנִּמְצָאִים — *Who were present*. The Jewish notables, גְּדוּלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, had been there but they fled following the decree of Mordechai against participating in the festivities.

The Jews who remained in Shushan participated in the festivities and, although they did not partake of forbidden foods, their mere *presence* at such a gathering was sinful (*Me'am Loez; Rav Galico; Midr. Abba Gorion*).

לְמַגְדוֹל וְלְמִקְטָן — *Great and small alike*. The small were served as lavishly as the great (*Kol Rinah*).

6. [This banquet took place outdoors in the courtyard that the King ordered decorated, in the

Oriental manor, with hanging curtains, etc., as enumerated in this verse].

חֹזֶר *White [garments]*. The letter ח [Ches] has the numerical value of 8. In the Megillah the Ches is enlarged to imply that on that climactic day Ahasuerus adorned himself with the eight garments of the High Priest. In punishment for this, he suffered the multiple evils of the resulting episode with Vashti, her death, his embarrassment, and his subsequent depression (*M'nos Halevi*).

7. The verse continues to describe the extravagance of the feast. The wine was drunk only from golden goblets, yet no drinking cup was used more than a single time, and no two goblets were alike. As magnificent as his utensils were, when the holy vessels of the Temple were brought in, the golden splendor of the others were dimmed — they turned dull as lead (*Yalkut Shimoni*).

The Jews who saw the Temple's holy vessels being used were greatly saddened at their profanation, and

פֶּרֶק א מִכְּלִים שׁוֹגִים וַיֵּין מַלְכוּת רַב כֶּיֶד
 חִי הַמֶּלֶךְ: וְהַשְׁתִּיָּה בְּדַת אֵין אֲנֹס כִּי־כֹן
 יִסַּד הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל כָּל־רַב בֵּיתוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת
 ט כִּרְצוֹן אִישׁ־וָאִישׁ: גַּם וְשִׁתִּי
 הַמֶּלֶכָּה עָשְׂתָה מִשְׁתֵּה נָשִׁים בֵּית
 הַמַּלְכוּת אֲשֶׁר לַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרוֹשׁ: בְּיוֹם
 הַשְּׁבִיעִי כְּטוֹב לִב־הַמֶּלֶךְ בֵּינָן אָמַר

they resolved to leave the feast. The King, not wanting them to be saddened, prepared a banquet for them outside. For his grievous sin of profaning the Temple's vessels Ahasuerus deserved to be punished immediately. It was only in the merit of Ahasuerus' future wife, Esther, and their son, Darius, who would one day allow the Jews to rebuild the Temple and return the vessels, that Ahasuerus was not punished with loss of his throne. Instead, his festivity was saddened by the death of Vashti for which he bore the onus (*Me'am Loez*).

רב—*And royal wine in abundance*. Every one was served wine older, רב, than himself (*Megillah 12a*).

The reason that all this splendor detailed here was not also enumerated when the first banquet for the nobility and officers was described, is, as our sages tell us: (*Chag*, 13b). A townsman who sees the king is not as a villager who sees the king. To the townsman the sight of the king is not such a novelty and he is less prone to indulge in lengthy descriptions; the villager, to whom the sight of the king is a rare thrill, is inclined to give his impressions at length. Here too, at the banquet for the nobility there was little

need for lengthy description. But at the Shushan banquet held for all the people — not normally exposed to such lavishness — more description was called for (*Imrei Moshe*).

8. — *וְהַשְׁתִּיָּה בְּדַת אֵין אֲנֹס* — *And the drinking was according to the law; without coercion*. Rabbi Levi said that the tradition among the inhabitants of Persia was that each individual was forced to drink from a large cup containing twenty-two *reviis* wine (over two quarts)! It made no difference to them whether an individual died or lost his sanity consuming this large amount of liquor. Ahasuerus decided to have this huge goblet on his table so that his guests would not think that he was stingy, but no one was forced to drink from it. He made the cup available realizing that perhaps someone would want to drink from this cup in particular.

This clarifies the meaning of the phrase, *וְהַשְׁתִּיָּה בְּדַת* and the *drinking was according to the law*, according to the regular proceedings. However, *אֵין אֲנֹס without coercion*; those who wished to drink from the traditional cup drank from it while those who wished to partake only a small amount were free to do so (*Or Hachaim*).

Also, there was no shortage of

I alike—and royal wine in abundance, according to the
8-10 bounty of the King. ⁸ And the drinking was according to the law; without coercion; for so the King had ordered all the officers of his house that they should do according to every man's pleasure.

Vashti
 refuses the
 King's
 summons

⁹ Queen Vashti also made a feast for the women in the royal house of King Ahasuerus. ¹⁰ On the seventh day, when the heart of the King was merry with wine,

drinking utensils, so that אין אָנס, *no one was coerced* into finishing his drink quickly in order to make his cup available to someone else (*Kad Hakemach*).

כָּרְצוֹן אִישׁ-וְאִישׁ — According to every man's pleasure [lit. according to the pleasure of 'man and man'.] According to the pleasure of even Mordechai and Haman [Mordechai and Haman both being referred to as אִישׁ, 'man' (2:5 and 7:6)]—Mordechai the Jew and Haman enemy of the Jews. They both wished that there be no compulsion to drink. Mordechai hoped that the Jews would not be forced to eat any part of the feast; while Haman hoped that the Jews would drink of their own free will, thus meriting punishment from G-d for having drunk willingly (*Me'am Loez*).

Another interpretation is that both Mordechai and Haman did not wish the Jews to participate in the festivities — Mordechai, so that they would not drink defiled wine; and Haman to deny them the honor of being invited to the feast (*Me'am Loez*).

9. וְשָׂתִי הַמְּלָכָה — Queen Vashti also. The word גם, *also*, always signifies something in addition to the plain meaning. Just as Ahasuerus opened six treasuries, so she opened six treasuries . . . just as

he wore the high-priestly garments, so she wore the high priestly garments" (*Midrash*).

"Another explanation of גם, also,; the time has come for Vashti also to be razed (לְגַמּוֹם) to her foundation; the time has come for Vashti to be plucked; the time has come for Vashti to be trodden. Rav Huna said: The time of Vashti has come to die" (*Midrash*).

וְשָׂתִי הַמְּלָכָה — Queen Vashti. The daughter of Belshazzar, and granddaughter of Nebuchadnezzar (*Seder Hadoros*).

מִשְׁתֵּה נָשִׁים — Feast for the women. As explained above, one of the reasons for Ahasuerus' lavish banquet was his marriage to Vashti. Therefore she followed her husband's example and celebrated their marriage with her own banquet (*Me'am Loez*).

All this is written about her to show how great was the affluence into which Esther stepped (*Midrash*).

בֵּית הַמְּלָכוֹת — The royal house. She set them in decorated rooms since 'a woman would rather have well-decorated rooms, and beautiful clothes than eat fatted calves' (*Midrash*).

10. בְּיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּעִי — On the seventh day. It was the Sabbath (*Rashi*).

The wicked Vashti used to take

לְמַהוּמָן בּוֹזָא חֲרוּבָא בְּגָתָא וְאַבְגָּתָא
וְתַר וּכְרָכְס שְׁבַעַת הַסְרִיסִים הַמְשָׁרְתִּים
אֶת־פְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֹׁרוּשׁ: לְהֵבִיא אֶת־^{יא}
וְשָׂתִי הַמַּלְכָּה לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּכֹתֵר מַלְכוּת
לְהֵרְאוֹת הָעַמִּים וְהַשָּׂרִים אֶת־יָפֶיהָ כִּי־
טוֹבֵת מֵרְאָה הִיא: וְתִמְאֵן הַמַּלְכָּה וְשָׂתִי^{יב}
לְבוֹא בְּדִבְרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר בִּיד הַסְרִיסִים
וַיִּקְצֹף הַמֶּלֶךְ מְאֹד וַחֲמָתוֹ בָּעָרָה בּוֹ:
וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לַחֲכָמִים יִדְעֵי הָעֵתִים כִּי־^{יג}
כֵּן דִּבֶּר הַמֶּלֶךְ לִפְנֵי כָל־יֹדְעֵי דָת וְדִין:
וְהִקְרַב אֵלָיו בְּרִשְׁנָא שְׁתֵּל אֲדַמְתָּא^{יד}
תְּרִישׁ מֵרֵס מֵרֵסָא מְמוּכָן שְׁבַעַת שָׂרֵי

the daughters of Israel, strip them of their clothing and make them work on the Sabbath. It was on the Sabbath, therefore, that her punishment overtook her, and, for the same reason, it was put into the King's heart to have her appear in public, stripped of all clothing (Meg. 12b).

Beginning with the first day of the King's banquet, Mordechai and the Sanhedrin fasted and prayed for six days that G-d should not destroy the Jews. On the seventh day, the Sabbath, G-d responded to their prayers by causing Vashti's rebellion (Me'am Loez).

11. בְּכֹתֵר מַלְכוּת — *Wearing the royal crown.* i.e. 'only with the royal crown,' i.e., unclothed, so her true beauty could be appreciated (Midrash).

12. וְתִמְאֵן הַמַּלְכָּה וְשָׂתִי — *But Queen Vashti refused.* Not because of modesty. The reason for her refusal was that G-d caused leprosy to break out on her, and paved the

way for her downfall (Meg. 12b).

Leprosy was punishment for her conceited manner (M'nos Halevi).

When Ahasuerus sent for her, he called her הַמַּלְכָּה וְשָׂתִי, '*Vashti the Queen*,' implying that her title was of secondary importance. He was suggesting that she was simply 'a Vashti', a commoner, who had been elevated to the throne because it pleased him to do so.

She, on the other hand, referred to herself as הַמַּלְכָּה וְשָׂתִי, '*Queen Vashti*,' to make it plain that she was of royal blood even before her marriage, and that her dignity was not to be trifled with.

Further on, when he wished to spare her, Ahasuerus referred to her as Queen Vashti, reminding his advisors that she was a queen — the daughter of a great ruler, a royal personage in her own right (Vilna Gaon).

וַיִּקְצֹף הַמֶּלֶךְ מְאֹד — *And the King therefore became very incensed.* Vashti responded to the King's re-

I he ordered Mehuman, Bizzetha, Charbonah, Bigtha and
11-14 Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains
 who attended King Ahasuerus, ¹¹ to bring queen
 Vashti before the King wearing the royal crown, to
 show off to the people and the officials her beauty; for
 she was beautiful to look upon. ¹² But Queen Vashti
 refused to come at the King's commandment con-
 veyed by the chamberlains; the King therefore
 became very incensed and his anger burned in him.
 The King seeks advice ¹³ Then the King conferred with the experts who
 knew the times (for such was the King's procedure [to
 turn] to all who knew law and judgment. ¹⁴ Those
 closest to him were Carshena, Shesar, Admasa,
 Tarshish, Meres, Marsena and Memuchan, the seven

quest by sending back scoffing and
 degrading messages via the
 chamberlains. This enraged him
 (Meg. 12b).

13. לַחֲכָמִים — *With the experts.*
 Literally the 'wise men.' The
 Talmud (Meg. 12b) understands
 this to be the Rabbis.

יֹדְעֵי הַעֲתִים — *Who knew the times.*
 That is, who knew how to calculate
 the timing of leap years and fix new
 moons (Meg. 12b).

Ibn Ezra, however, interprets this
 as referring to astrologers or those
 familiar with the historical preced-
 ents of earlier monarchs.

Ahasuerus, seeking impartial and
 trusted counsel, turned first to the
 Jewish sages and asked them to pass
 sentence on his Queen. The sages
 thought to themselves: 'If we con-
 demn the Queen to death we shall
 suffer for it as soon as Ahasuerus
 becomes sober and hears that it was
 upon our advice that she was ex-

executed. If we advise clemency and
 advise him to pardon her, he will ac-
 cuse us of not paying due reverence
 to the majesty of the King.' They,
 therefore, resolved to take a posi-
 tion of neutrality. They said to him,
 "From the day the Temple was
 destroyed and we were exiled from
 our land, we lost the power to give
 judgment in capital cases. Better
 seek counsel with the wise men of
 Ammon and Moab who have dwelt
 at ease in their land." Thereupon,
 he sought advice from his seven of-
 ficials, as we read אֵלָיו וְהָקִירָב
 בְּרִשְׁנָא וכו' *those closest to him*
were Carshena, etc. (Meg. 12b).

-- כִּי כֵן דְּבַר הַמֶּלֶךְ -- *For such was*
the King's procedure. [The King did
 not pass judgment upon her himself
 because, legally, a King may not
 have sole jurisdiction over a serious
 offense. Rather he is to seek counsel
 from יֹדְעֵי דֵת נְרִין, those 'who knew
 law and judgment.' (See comm. to
 verse 19 s.v. יִצָּא.)]

פֶּרֶס וּמְדֵי רֹאֵי פָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ הַיְשָׁבִים
 רִאשְׁנָה בַּמַּלְכוּת: כִּדְת מַה־לַּעֲשׂוֹת
 בַּמַּלְכָּה וְשִׁתִּי עַל־אֲשֶׁר לֹא־עָשְׂתָה אֶת־
 מַאֲמַר הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֻׁרוֹשׁ בֶּיַד הַסְּרִיסִים:
 וַיֹּאמֶר מִוְמָכֵן לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַשָּׂרִים לֹא
 עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ לְבַדּוֹ עֲוֹתָה וְשִׁתִּי הַמַּלְכָּה כִּי
 עַל־כָּל־הַשָּׂרִים וְעַל־כָּל־הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר
 בְּכָל־מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֻׁרוֹשׁ: כִּי־יֵצֵא
 דְּבַר־הַמַּלְכָּה עַל־כָּל־הַנָּשִׁים לְהַכְזוֹת
 בְּעִלְיָהֶן בְּעִינְיָהֶן בְּאִמְרָם הַמֶּלֶךְ
 אַחֲשֻׁרוֹשׁ אָמַר לְהַבִּיא אֶת־וְשִׁתִּי
 הַמַּלְכָּה לִפְנָיו וְלֹא־כָּאָה: וְהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה
 תֵּאֲמַרְנָה|שָׁרוֹת פֶּרֶס־וּמְדֵי אֲשֶׁר שָׁמְעוּ
 אֶת־דְּבַר הַמַּלְכָּה לְכָל שָׂרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְכַדִּי
 בְּזִיוֹן וְקֶצֶף: אִם־עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב יֵצֵא
 דְּבַר־מַלְכוּת מִלִּפְנָיו וַיִּכְתֹּב בְּדַתִּי פֶּרֶס־

ממוכן ק' טו

יז

יח

יט

14. — *Who had access to the King.* Ordinarily, the Persian King was accessible to the public, but these seven advisers had constant accessibility (literally 'saw the face') to the King.

— *Sat first in the kingdom.* [They were the highest ranking officials of the kingdom.]

15. This verse is a continuation after the parenthetical break of verse 13: 'Then the King conferred with the experts' (Rashi).

— *Legally.* i.e. from a legal standpoint. Ahasuerus was concerned about treating the wicked Vashti only according to law. Yet

this same wicked Ahasuerus barbarously condemned the whole of the Jewish people to destruction without ever consulting the law (*Midrash Panim Acherim*).

16. — *Memuchan declared.* A Tanna taught: 'Memuchan is Haman. Why was he called Memuchan? Because he was destined [מוכן] for destruction. Rav Kahana said: 'From here we see that an ignoramus always thrusts himself to the forefront.' [Memuchan is mentioned last in verse 14, yet he speaks first.] (*Meg. 12b; Midrash*).

Everywhere else he is referred to as ממוכן but here he is called a combination of the two words מום כן, meaning "a blemish is here."

I officers of Persia and Media, who had access to the King, and who sat first in the kingdom—)¹⁵ as to what should be done, legally, to Queen Vashti for not obeying the bidding of the King Ahasuerus conveyed by the chamberlains.

Memuchan's
suggestion

¹⁶ Memuchan declared before the King and the officials: 'It is not only the King whom Vashti has wronged, but also all the officials and all the people in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. ¹⁷ For this deed of the Queen will come to the attention of all women, making their husbands contemptible in their eyes, by saying: King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him but she did not come! ¹⁸ And this day the princesses of Persia and Media who have heard of the Queen's deed will cite it to all the King's officials, and there will be much contempt and wrath.

Vashti is
deposed

¹⁹ If it please the King, let there go forth a royal edict from him, and let it be written into the laws of the

The blemish is his discourtesy in speaking out of turn. The Torah is not tolerant of boorishness (*Mesoras Habris*).

17. When the word gets out that the queen acted contemptibly to the king, every woman will consider this as license to act likewise to her own husband (*Rashi*).

Memuchan therefore warned the King of two dire results of her action:

1. Her refusal would undoubtedly have a bad influence on her peers. When it becomes known that King Ahasuerus commanded that Queen Vashti be brought before him, but she refused to obey, other wives will feel free to be disrespectful of their husbands as well; 2. Women were

there when she belittled the King and will inform their husbands of the manner in which she deprecated her husband resulting in them poking fun at the King (*Nachal Eshkol*).

18. וְכָרִי בְּנֵיוֹן וְקֶצֶף — *And there will be much contempt and wrath*, i.e. this affair, if allowed to get out of hand, is fraught with the danger of excessive contempt and wrath (*Rashi, Ibn Ezra*).

19. אִם-עֲלֶיהֶם לֵךְ טוֹב — *If it please the King*. [A deferential, almost obsequious phrase].

וַיֵּצֵא דְבַר-מַלְכוּת מִלְּפָנָיו — *Let there go forth a royal edict from him*. Memuchan suggested that Ahasuerus abolish the requirement that a King consult learned men for advice

וּמְדִי וְלֹא יַעֲבֹר אֲשֶׁר לֹא-תָבֹא וְשִׁתִּי
 לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרוֹשׁ וּמַלְכוּתָהּ יִתֵּן
 הַמֶּלֶךְ לְרַעוּתָהּ הַטּוֹבָה מִמֶּנָּה: וְנִשְׁמַע
 בִּי פִתְגָם הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר-יַעֲשֶׂה בְּכָל-מַלְכוּתוֹ
 כִּי רָבָה הִיא וְכָל-הַנָּשִׁים יִתְּנוּ יָקָר
 לְבַעֲלֵיהֶן לְמַגְדֹּל וְעַד-קָטָן: וַיִּיטֹב הַדָּבָר
 בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַשָּׂרִים וַיַּעַשׂ הַמֶּלֶךְ כְּדָבָר
 כִּב מִמוֹכָן: וַיִּשְׁלַח סָפְרִים אֶל-כָּל-מְדִינֹת
 הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל-מְדִינָהּ וּמְדִינָהּ בְּכַתְּבָהּ וְאֶל-

prior to making an important decision. We have been informed of this tradition previously [verse 13]: 'Then the King conferred with the experts who knew the times, for such was the King's procedure to turn to all who knew laws and judgment' (Yosef Lekach).

Memuchan felt that it was not necessary for the King to discuss his judgment with others.

It was ordained by G-d that this new law giving sweeping powers to the King be inscribed in their judicial canons so that it could later be the instrument of Haman's death, as it says: [chapter 7, v9]: *Then Charbonah, one of the chamberlains said, "Behold the gallows ... " Then the King said, "hang him on it!"* The King then passed independent judgment upon Haman, no questions asked. Thus, Haman inadvertently brought about his own downfall (Me'am Loez).

וְלֹא יַעֲבֹר — *that it be not revoked.* The law should be permanent for all women who ever show contempt for their husbands (Rashi).

וְשִׁתִּי — *That Vashti*

never again appear. Haman was still worried that Ahasuerus might reconsider and pardon Vashti — thereby reversing the tables — for Memuchan would hardly want to face the consequences of a re-instated Vashti. He therefore requested that the decree be irrevocable, and that Vashti never again be permitted to appear before the King (Me'am Loez).

Rashi understands this in the past tense, i.e., that Vashti *did not appear* before the King (at his command) and therefore she deserved the death penalty.

[Note the probably deliberate omission here of the title מַלְכָּה — 'Queen.']

לְרַעוּתָהּ הַטּוֹבָה מִמֶּנָּה — *Upon another who is better than she.* Memuchan had told Ahasuerus that his second wife would most certainly be more obedient than her predecessor having made note of the manner in which Vashti was killed, and having read the stern decree proclaimed throughout the land. His second wife would realize that if the King could not find it in his heart to forgive his first love his beloved

I 20-22 *Persians and the Medes, that it be not revoked, that Vashti never again appear before King Ahasuerus; and let the King confer her royal estate upon another who is better than she. ²⁰ Then, when the King's decree which he shall proclaim shall be resounded throughout all his kingdom—great though it be—all the wives will show respect to their husbands, great and small alike.’ ²¹ This proposal pleased the King and the officials, and the King did according to the word of Memuchan; ²² and he sent letters into all the King's provinces, to each province in its own script, and to*

wife, for having disobeyed him, she, as his second choice, would have to tread very carefully (Me'am Loez).

20. וְנִשְׁמַע פִּתְּוֹם הַמֶּלֶךְ. — *The King's decree shall be resounded.* [Literally: 'shall be heard'.]

וְכָל־הַנָּשִׁים יִתְּנוּ יָקָר לְבָעֲלֵיהֶן — *All the wives will show respect to their husbands.* [Once they see the revenge taken against Vashti, they will show respect to their own husbands. Ahasuerus accepted the advice and had her killed].

All this was written in such detail to teach us how the Almighty weaves a web of intrigue and paradox to accomplish miracles for Israel! Ahasuerus issued a decree designed to accommodate the wishes of even his lowliest subject; yet he did not hesitate to make the outrageous and humiliating demand upon his own wife — his Queen, daughter of royalty — to appear unclothed in public against her will. His caprice resulted in her death, and paved the way for Esther and the ultimate miracle (Vilna Gaon).

לְמַגְדֹּל וְעַד־קָטָן — *Great and small alike.* [I.e. both the upper and lower classes.]

21. וַיִּטֵּב הַדָּבָר בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ. — *This proposal pleased the King.* "He gave the order and they brought in her head on a platter" (Midrash).

22. אֶל־מְדִינָהּ וּמְדִינָהּ בְּכַתְּבָהּ. — *To each province in its own script.* Ahasuerus wrote the proclamation in the various local scripts and languages. A King usually commands his subjects to learn one "official" language. Ahasuerus, however, went out of his way not to burden each province to give up its native tongue; a device to win the gratitude of his subjects and further consolidate his throne (Yosef Lekach).

לְהִיוֹת כָּל־אִישׁ שָׂרָר בְּבֵיתוֹ — *That every man should rule in his own home.* The relevance of this part of the decree is difficult to understand. Raba said that had it not been for this decree, even a shred would not have remained of the Jews. People said: 'What does he mean by

עם נַעַם כְּלִשְׁוֹנוֹ לְהִיּוֹת כָּל-אִישׁ שַׂר
בְּבֵיתוֹ וּמִדְּבַר כְּלִשְׁוֹן עַמּוֹ:

פֶּרֶק ב' א אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה בָּשָׁר חֲמַת הַמֶּלֶךְ
אֲחֻשְׁרוּשׁ זָכַר אֶת-וַשְׁתִּי וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר-
ב עָשָׂתָה וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר-נִגְזַר עָלֶיהָ: וַיֹּאמְרוּ
ג נַעֲרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁרָתָיו יִבְקְשׁוּ לַמֶּלֶךְ
נְעֻרוֹת בְּתוּלוֹת טוֹבוֹת מֵרָאֶה: וַיִּפְקֹד
הַמֶּלֶךְ פְּקִידִים בְּכָל-מְדִינֹת מַלְכוּתוֹ
וַיִּקְבְּצוּ אֶת-כָּל-נַעֲרֵה-בְּתוּלָה טוֹבָה
מֵרָאֶה אֶל-שׁוֹשַׁן הַבִּירָה אֶל-בֵּית
הַנָּשִׁים אֶל-יַד הַגָּא סָרִיס הַמֶּלֶךְ שֶׁמֶר
ד הַנָּשִׁים וַנִּתֵּן תַּמְרָקִיהֶן: וְהַנַּעֲרָה אֲשֶׁר
תֵּיטֵב בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ תִּמְלֹךְ תַּחַת וַשְׁתִּי

sending us word that every man should rule in his own home? Of course he should! Even a weaver in his own home must be boss!' (*Meg. 12b*)

The commentaries explained that upon reading this first decree, everyone saw how foolish the King was. Later, therefore, when they read his second decree about exterminating the Jews on the 13th of

Adar, they were afraid that the King issued this decree while intoxicated and that he would change his mind and reverse the order the next morning. Were it not for this mockery, they would have responded immediately to the second decree by "jumping the gun," and would not have waited for the appointed date to exterminate the Jews (*Me'am Loez*).

II

1. זָכַר אֶת-וַשְׁתִּי — *He remembered Vashti*, i.e. with affection and remorse.

He remembered the order he had

given her to appear unclothed before him and how she refused, and how he had been wroth with her and put her to death (*Midrash*).

each people in its own language, to the effect that every man should rule in his own home, and speak the language of his own people.

II
1-4

¹After these things, when the wrath of King Ahasuerus subsided, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what had been decreed against her. ²Then the King's pages said: "Let there be sought for the King beautiful young maidens; and let the King appoint commissioners in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together every beautiful young maiden to Shushan the capitol to the harem, under the charge of Hege the King's chamberlain, custodian of the women; and let their cosmetics be given them. ⁴Then, let the girl who pleases the King be queen instead of Vashti." This

Ahasuerus
seeks a new
Queen

The King obviously mentioned his recriminations or how else would his pages know to respond? (Yosef Lekach).

וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר-נִגְזַר עָלֶיהָ — And what had been decreed against her. A decree that was patently unjust. The Midrash explains that Vashti deserved to suffer this miserable fate because she prevailed upon Ahasuerus to halt the construction of the Temple which had begun with the permission of Ahasuerus' predecessor, Cyrus. She used to say to him, 'Do you seek to build what my ancestors destroyed?'

commissioners were chosen from each of the 127 provinces, rather than from Shushan, because a local commissioner would more readily be able to find the most beautiful girls in his province (M'nos Halevi; see Rashi).

וַיִּקְבְּצוּ — That they may gather together. They gathered girls even by snatching them against their will (Me'am Loez).

Why did G-d subject the Persian women to the humiliation of being taken to the King and then rejected in favor of Esther [the Jewess]? Because the Persian women used to pour contempt on the daughters of Israel, calling them ugly and saying none would look at them (Midrash).

3. פְּקִידִים — Commissioners. Local

פֶּרֶק ב וַיִּיטֵב הַדָּבָר בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיַּעַשׂ כֵּן: הִזֵּז
 אִישׁ יְהוּדִי הָיָה בְּשׁוֹשָׁן הַבִּירָה וּשְׁמוֹ
 מֶרְדֳּכַי בֶּן יָאִיר בֶּן-שִׁמְעִי בֶן-קִישׁ אִישׁ
 יְמִינִי: אֲשֶׁר הִגָּלָה מִירוּשָׁלַיִם עִם-הַגָּלָה
 אֲשֶׁר הִגָּלְתָּה עִם יְכָנְיָה מֶלֶךְ-יְהוּדָה
 אֲשֶׁר הִגָּלָה נְבוּכַדְרֶצַּר מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל: וַיְהִי

4. — *And he followed it*, by sending out the commissioners. Ahasuerus was afraid that, if they knew they were to be drafted for the harem, the beautiful girls would hide or flee the kingdom. He told his commissioners, therefore, not to make their real mission known, but to go about their normal routine while secretly compiling a list of the whereabouts of the beautiful girls. Then the King dispatched other officers to round them up without warning (*Me'am Loez*).

5. — *A Jewish man*. All those who were exiled along with the Kings of Judah were called 'Yehudi' by the gentiles — regardless of their original tribe (*Rashi*).

The term 'Yehudi' (derived from Yehudah, or Judah, fourth son of Jacob) has become a synonym for Jew. Yehudah's mother gave him that name because, as she said, 'I will praise G-d.' Yehudah is thus a declaration that Jews always praise G-d, hence the common name Yehudi regardless of tribal origin (*Sfas Emes*).

He was the only one who remained in Shushan, but did not partake of the food during the King's banquet (*Rav Galico*).

The title *איש* — *man* indicates

that Mordechai in his generation was equal to Moses in his, for of Moses, too, it is written: וְהָאִישׁ מֹשֶׁה עָנָו מְאֹד, *And the 'man' Moses was very humble* [Numbers 12:3] (*Midrash*).

He was a member of the Sanhedrin (*Midrash*).

This verse, as well as the verses: לַיהוּדִים הִיתָה, [8:15] וּמֶרְדֳּכַי וְיָצָא כִּי מֶרְדֳּכַי הַיְּהוּדִי and [8:16] אִוְרָה [10:3] are read aloud by the Congregation during the reading of the Megillah in the Synagogue. Among the reasons offered for this wide-spread custom are: to popularize the miracle [פִּרְסוּמִי נִסָּא]; these verses express the essence of the miracle through Mordechai; and to keep the children alert and prevent them from dozing off. The congregation recites the verses loudly as an expression of the joy of the day. The reader then repeats the verses because each verse must be read from the Megillah (*RaMA, Orach Chayim 690:17; Mishneh Brurah ad. loc. Mishne Brurah 689:16. See Abudarham; Kol Bo; Levush*).

— *In Shushan the capitol*. He acted as a Jew not only in the privacy of his home, nor only in his study-house, but even in Shushan — in the street, among people... (*R. Yonasan Eybescheutz*).

advice pleased the King, and he followed it.

⁵There was a Jewish man in Shushan the capitol whose name was Mordechai, son of Yair, son of Shim'i, son of Kish, a Benjaminite, ⁶who had been exiled from Jerusalem along with the exiles who had been exiled with Jechoniah, King of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon had exiled. ⁷And

וּשְׁמוֹ מֶרְדֵּכַי — Whose name was Mordechai. In Scripture, the names of the wicked are given before the word שֵׁם (name); as it says: וְכָל שְׁמוֹ — Nabal was his name; וְגִלְיָת שְׁמוֹ — Goliath was his name; וְשֶׁבַע בֶּן בְּכָרִי שְׁמוֹ — Sheva son of Bichri was his name. But the names of the righteous are preceded by the word שֵׁם — 'name' — as it says: וּשְׁמוֹ מָנוּחַ — And his name was Manoach; וּשְׁמוֹ קִישׁ — And his name was Kish; וּשְׁמוֹ אֶלְקָנָה — And his name was Elkanah; וּשְׁמוֹ שָׁאוּל — And his name was Saul; וּשְׁמוֹ בֹּעַז — And his name was Boaz; וּשְׁמוֹ יֵשׁוּעַ — And his name was Jesse; וּשְׁמוֹ מֶרְדֵּכַי — And his name was Mordechai. They thus resemble their Creator of whom it is written וְשֵׁם ה' — 'But by My Name HASHEM I made me not known to them' [Ex. 6:2] (Midrash Rabba; Midrash Abba Gorion).

מֶרְדֵּכַי — Mordechai. Where is Mordechai alluded to in the Torah? — In the verse מֶרְדְּרוֹר — flowing myrrh [Exod. 30:22] which the Targum renders as מִירָא דַּחְיָא 'Mira Dachia' [which both in spelling and sound resemble מֶרְדֵּכַי — Mordechai — (Chulin 139b)].

Just as myrrh is the foremost of spices, so Mordechai was the foremost of the righteous of his generation (Midrash).

בֶּן יֶאֱיִר בֶּן שִׁמְעִי בֶן יַקִּישׁ — Son of

Yair, son of Shim'i, son of Kish. He wasn't literally: 'son of' but rather 'descendant of' (Megilas Sesarim).

אִישׁ יִמִּינִי — A Benjaminite. Mordechai, as a descendant of Benjamin, deserved to be instrumental in saving the Jewish people because Benjamin was the only brother who did not participate in selling Joseph into bondage. The descendants of the other brothers are perpetually punished for this crime (Me'am Loez).

[Mordechai was a descendant of King Saul and thus was instrumental in correcting Saul's iniquity of allowing Agag to escape and beget a son who was the forefather of Haman].

The Hebrew for 'Benjaminite' is אִישׁ יִמִּינִי, man from the right — i.e. Mordechai never swerved to the left (Tiferes Shlomo).

אֲשֶׁר הִגְלוּ — Who had been exiled. They had all been exiled but Mordechai particularly is so described because he continually anguished over the Exile (Tiferes Shlomo).

Another interpretation offered by the Sages: Mordechai went into self-exile before the rest of his people to establish a holy atmosphere in Persia so the Jews could survive the exile there. He followed the example of Jacob, who went down to Egypt

אֲמֵן אֶת־הַדָּסָה הִיא אֶסְתֵּר בַּת־דָּדוֹ כִּי
אֵין לָהּ אָב וְאִם וְהַנְּעָרָה יִפְתָּהָאֵר
וְטוֹבַת מְרָאָה וּבְמֹת אֲבִיהָ וְאִמָּהּ לְקַחָהּ
מִדְּרָכֶי לֹו לְבַת: וַיְהִי בַּהֲשָׁמַע דְּבַר־
הַמֶּלֶךְ וְדָתוֹ וּבַהֲקַבֵּץ נַעֲרוֹת רַבּוֹת אֶל־
שׁוֹשַׁן הַבִּירָה אֶל־יָד הַגִּי וּתְלַקַּח אֶסְתֵּר
אֶל־בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל־יָד הַגִּי שְׁמֵר הַנָּשִׁים:
וַתִּיטֹב הַנְּעָרָה בְּעֵינֶיהָ וַתִּשָּׂא חֶסֶד לִפְנֵיהָ
וַיִּבְהַל אֶת־תְּמִרוּקֶיהָ וְאֶת־מְנוּחָהּ לְתַת
לָהּ וְאֶת שְׁבַע הַנְּעָרוֹת הַקָּרְאוֹת לְתַת־
לָהּ מִבֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיִּשְׁנֶה וְאֶת־נַעֲרוֹתֶיהָ
לְטוֹב בֵּית הַנָּשִׁים: לֹא־הִגִּידָהּ אֶסְתֵּר

before the enslavement of his children, to sow the seeds of holiness which sustained them in their exile (*Tiferes Shlomo*).

7. אֲמֵן — *Reared*. This word connotes the constant supervision and ministering demanded of a mother by her child. Mordechai, despite being a renowned member of the Sanhedrin, did not hesitate to perform these services for the child Esther (*Me'am Loez*).

הַדָּסָה — *Hadassah*. There is a difference of opinion among the Sages (*Meg. 13a*) whether Hadassah was her proper name and Esther was added later, or *vice-versa*. Both names are descriptive of her virtues. Hadassah is derived from the Hebrew word הָדַס—'myrtle'; Esther from אֶסְתֵּהר — *Istahar* ['as beautiful as the moon' — (*Rashi*).]

'Just as the myrtle (הָדַס) has a sweet smell but a bitter taste, so Esther was sweet to Mordechai but bitter to Haman' (*Midrash*).

'Where is Esther alluded to in the Torah? — In the verse וַאֲנִי הִסְתֵּר פָּנַי בְּיוֹם הַהוּא אֶסְתִּיר (אֶסְתִּיר) *My face on that day* [Deut. 31:18] (*Chulin 139b*).

[The verse in *Devarim* speaks of the many evils which will ח"ו befall Israel if they forsake G-d's ways, evils symbolized by G-d's 'hiding' His benevolent Face].

In Esther's lifetime G-d seemingly diverted (הִסְתִּיר) His attention from Israel because of their evil ways (*The Chortkover Rebbe*).

וּבְמֹת אֲבִיהָ וְאִמָּהּ — *And when her father and mother had died*. Her father died before her birth, and her mother at her birth (*Megilla 13a*).

לְקַחָהּ לֹו לְבַת — *Adopted her as his daughter*. 'A Tanna taught in the name of Rav Meir: Read not "as a daughter" [לְבַת] but "for a home" [לְבֵית] i.e. "a wife"' (*Meg. 13a*). [See *Overview*.]

8. בַּהֲשָׁמַע — *Were published*. [Lit.

Esther is
brought to
the harem

he had reared Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter; since she had neither father nor mother. The girl was finely featured and beautiful, and when her father and mother had died, Mordechai adopted her as his daughter. ⁸So it came to pass, when the King's bidding and decrees were published, and when many young girls were being brought together to Shushan the capitol, under the charge of Hegai, that Esther was taken into the palace, under the charge of Hegai, guardian of the women. ⁹The girl pleased him, and she obtained his kindness; he hurriedly prepared her cosmetics and her allowance of delicacies to present her; along with the seven special maids from the palace; and he transferred her and her maidens to the best quarters in the harem. ¹⁰Esther had not told of

'were heard'].

וְתִלְקָה אֶסְתֵּר — *Esther was taken.* It is obvious from the phrase 'was taken' that when the edict was promulgated Mordechai had tried to hide Esther and that she was ultimately taken to the harem by force (*Targum Sheni*, *Yosef Lekach*).

9. וְתִיטֵב הַנַּעֲרָה בְּעֵינָיו — *The girl pleased him,* not only with superficial beauty. Unlike some who only appear good from afar, Esther was pleasing even after one got to know her well (*Maamar Mordechai*).

וְאֵת שִׁבְעַת הַנַּעֲרוֹת הָרְאִיּוֹת — *With the seven special maids.* The Talmud explains that there were seven so that she could count the days of the week through rotating their schedule so that the same one always served her on a given day. The commentators wonder why

Esther — a prophetess — would need such a system to keep track of the Sabbath. Esther was keeping her identity as a Jewess hidden. Forever mindful that בְּשִׁלָּה מְבִיאָה לִיָּדֵי שִׁיעוּמוֹם *laziness leads to indolence* — she kept herself busy throughout the week. Afraid that her maids would notice that on the Sabbath she performed no work and guess she was Jewish, she appointed a different maid for each day of the week. Those who ministered her during the week didn't see her rest on the Sabbath; the Sabbath maid, meanwhile, assumed that just as she did no work on the Sabbath, she did no work on any days of the week (*Yaaros Devash*).

10. לֹא הִגִּידָה אֶסְתֵּר — *Esther had not told.* She guarded the secret for nine years until Haman's downfall in the twelfth year of Ahasuerus' reign (*Me'am Loez*).

אֶת-עַמָּהּ וְאֶת-מִלְדֻתָּהּ כִּי מְרַדְכֵי צֹנָה
עָלֶיהָ אֲשֶׁר לֹא-תִגִּיד: וּבְכָל-יוֹם וַיּוֹם
מְרַדְכֵי מִתְהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי חֲצַר בֵּית-הַנָּשִׁים
לְדַעַת אֶת-שְׁלוֹם אֶסְתֵּר וּמִה-יַעֲשֶׂה בָּהּ:
וּבִהְגִּיעַ תֶּרַח נַעֲרָה וְנַעֲרָה לָבוֹא | אֶל-
הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרוֹשׁ מִקֵּץ הַיּוֹת לָהּ כְּכַת
הַנָּשִׁים שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר חֹדֶשׁ כִּי בֵן יִמְלֹאוּ
יָמֵי מְרוֹקִיָּהֵן שִׁשָּׁה חֳדָשִׁים בְּשִׁמּוֹן הַמֶּלֶךְ
וּשִׁשָּׁה חֳדָשִׁים בְּבִשְׁמַיִם וּבִתְמָרוֹקִי
הַנָּשִׁים: וּבֹזֶה הַנַּעֲרָה בָּאָה אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ
אֶת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר תֹּאמַר יִנָּתֵן לָהּ לָבוֹא עִמָּהּ
מִבֵּית הַנָּשִׁים עַד-בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ: בְּעֶרְבֹה־הִיא
בָּאָה וּבִבְקָר הִיא שָׁכָה אֶל-בֵּית הַנָּשִׁים
שְׁנֵי אֶל-יָד שְׁעֵשְׂגוֹ סָרִיס הַמֶּלֶךְ שֹׁמֵר

Many reasons are given for keeping Esther's Jewishness secret: Mordechai must have realized that if Esther was chosen to be Queen it could only be that she was to be instrumental in saving Israel from some impending calamity. He reasoned that if her origins as a Jew were known, Ahasuerus would never choose her and she would lose her opportunity (*R. Eleazar of Worms*).

Mordechai had Esther keep her relationship to him secret so others would not be secretive in his presence (*Yosef Lekach*).

Rashi comments that she did not declare her royal lineage (as a descendant of the family of King Saul) so that the king might think that she was of humble origin and send her away.

Ibn Ezra explains that the pur-

pose of her secrecy was so that she might secretly observe her religion. Had she declared her faith, she would have been forced to transgress.

According to the *Vilna Gaon*, Mordechai was afraid that his family and nation would be killed for having kept Esther hidden for so long, and for not surrendering her voluntarily when she was finally discovered. Now that she was made Queen, however, and no one even rebuked her for having hidden, the reason for withholding her identity no longer applied. Nevertheless *Esther had not told*, in deference to Mordechai כִּי מְרַדְכֵי צֹנָה עָלֶיהָ — *for Mordechai instructed her*.

11. מִתְהַלֵּךְ — *Used to walk about.* Mordechai did not make it obvious

her people or her kindred, for Mordechai had instructed her not to tell. ¹¹Every day Mordechai used to walk about in front of the court of the harem to find out about Esther's well-being and what would become of her.

¹²Now when each girl's turn arrived to come to King Ahasuerus, after having been treated according to the manner prescribed for women for twelve months (for so was the prescribed length of their anointing accomplished: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes, and feminine cosmetics) — ¹³when then the girl thus came to the king, she was given whatever she desired to accompany her from the harem to the palace. ¹⁴In the evening she would come, and the next morning she would return to the second harem in the custody of

that he was interested in Esther; to do that would have revealed her Jewishness. The verb used in this verse is not הוֹלֵךְ — 'walk' but מְהַלֵּךְ — 'strolled' around the court of the harem so that his true intention of inquiring after Esther's welfare would not be realized by the guards (Me'am Loez).

שְׁלוֹם אֶסְתֵּר — Esther's well-being. To answer ritual questions (Midrash).

וּמָה יֵעָשֶׂה בָּהּ — And what would become of her. i.e. 'And what would be accomplished by her' — through her' [As mentioned earlier (Commentary v. 10), Mordechai realized that Esther's torment must have been so that she could become the Divine instrument for saving her people.] (Rashi, Yosef Lekach).

12. שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר חֹדֶשׁ — Twelve months. Ahasuerus wanted to make sure that none of the girls were diseased. He therefore ordained that twelve months should elapse so that any symptoms of illness would surface during that time (M'nos Halevi).

כִּי בִן יָמֶיךָ — For so was the prescribed length [This parenthetical phrase indicates to us that twelve months was not an arbitrarily long waiting period, but that it took that long for the cosmetics and anointing to have the desired effect].

13. כִּלְאֶשֶׁר תִּאֶמַר — Whatever she desired. To enhance her beauty, she was given whatever she desired in the way of jewelry or dress (Rav Galico).

הַפִּילְגָשִׁים לֹא־תָבוֹא עוֹד אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי
אִם־חֶפֶץ בָּהּ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְנִקְרָאָהּ בְּשֵׁם:
וּבְהִגִּיעַ תֶּרֶ־אֶסְתֵּר בֵּת־אֲבִיחַיִל | דָּד טו
מֶרְדֵּכַי אֲשֶׁר לָקַח־לּוֹ לְבַת לָבוֹא אֶל־
הַמֶּלֶךְ לֹא בִקְשָׁה דְּבָר כִּי אִם אֶת־אֲשֶׁר
יֹאמַר הִגִּי סֶרִיס־הַמֶּלֶךְ שִׁמְר הַנָּשִׁים
וְנָתַתִּי אֶסְתֵּר נִשְׂאֵת חֵן בְּעֵינַי כְּלִרְאִיָּה:
וְתִלְקַח אֶסְתֵּר אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֻׁרוּשׁ טז
אֶל־בֵּית מַלְכוּתוֹ בַּחֲדָשׁ הָעֲשִׁירִי הוּא־
חֲדָשׁ טֵבֵת בִּשְׁנַת־שֶׁבַע לְמַלְכוּתוֹ:
וַיָּאֵהֵב הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־אֶסְתֵּר מִכָּל־הַנָּשִׁים יז
וַתִּשְׂאֵ־חֵן וַחֲסֵד לִפְנֵי מִכָּל־הַבְּתוּלוֹת
וַיִּשֶׂם כְּתֶר־מַלְכוּת בְּרֹאשָׁהּ וַיְמַלִּיכָהּ
יח תַּחַת וְשָׁתִי: וַיַּעַשׂ הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁתֶּה גָדוֹל

14. — *The second harem.* Having consorted with the King, it would not be proper for them to marry other men. They were required to return to the harem and remain there for the rest of their lives as concubines, to await the possibility of being crowned Queen if the King found no one better (*Ibn Ezra; Alshich*).

15. — *וּבְהִגִּיעַ תֶּרֶ־אֶסְתֵּר בֵּת־אֲבִיחַיִל* — *Now when the turn came for Esther, daughter of Avichail.* Why is her family background and her father's name given for the first time only here? One also wonders why the fact that Mordechai adopted Esther is repeated at this point.

The reason is to let us know that precisely *because* she was acutely aware of her background, she asked

for nothing. She kept in mind that her father was Avichail, and that her relative and savior and adoptive father was Mordechai. With these images before her, she did not request any artificial beauty aids, in the hope of lessening her chances of finding favor in the eyes of Ahasuerus so that she would be rejected and possibly even be sent home to her family (*M'nos Halevi*).

חֵן וְנָתַתִּי אֶסְתֵּר נִשְׂאֵת חֵן — *Esther would captivate.* i.e. even though she requested nothing, her true beauty and grace found favor. 'R. Judah said: She was like a statue upon which a thousand persons look and admire equally. R. Nehemiah said: They placed Median women and Persian women on either side of her, and she was more beautiful than all of them' (*Midrash*).

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Shaashgaz, the King's chamberlain, guardian of the concubines. She would never again go to the King unless the King desired her, and she were summoned by name.

Esther is
chosen
Queen

¹⁵Now when the turn came for Esther, daughter of Avichail the uncle of Mordechai (who had adopted her as his own daughter) to come to the King, she requested nothing beyond what Hegai the King's chamberlain, guardian of the women, had advised. Esther would captivate all who saw her; ¹⁶Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus into his palace in the tenth month, which is the month of Teves, in the seventh year of his reign. ¹⁷The King loved Esther more than all the women, and she won more of his grace and favour than all the other girls; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen in place of Vashti. ¹⁸Then the King made a great banquet for all

'Rav Eleazar said: Everyone claimed her as a member of his own people' (Megilla 13a).

16. וְתִלְכָּח אֶסְתֵּר — *Esther was taken. By force, against her will (Midrash).*

17. מִכָּל־הַנָּשִׁים *More than all the women. i.e., 'more than the wives he already had' (Alshich).*

According to the Midrash, married women were also brought before him. [This explains why, according to the Rabbis who hold that Esther was legally married to Mordechai, Esther's claim that she was a married woman would not have saved her from being taken by force to the King's harem. Had the King been assembling maidens only, Esther could have exempted

herself by claiming she was married.]

מִכָּל־הַבָּתוּלוֹת — *Than all the other girls.* Although other maidens were awaiting their turn in the harem, once Ahasuerus saw Esther he instantly crowned her as his Queen without bothering to see the other beautiful candidates (Alshich).

According to the Talmud, Esther had the qualities both of a maiden and of a married woman (Megilla 13b) [See Overview.]

תַּחַת וַשְׁתִּי — *In place of Vashti.* Even though Vashti was of royal descent and Esther's origins were unknown, Ahasuerus loved Esther as much as he had loved Vashti (Alshich).

18. וַיַּעַשׂ הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁתֵּה גָדוֹל — *Then the King made a great banquet.* In

לְכָל־שָׂרָיו וְעַבְדָּיו אֶת מִשְׁתֵּה אֶסְתֵּר
וְהַנָּחָה לַמְּדִינוֹת עָשָׂה וַיִּתֵּן מִשָּׂאת כִּיֹּר
הַמֶּלֶךְ: וּבַהֲקִבֵּץ בְּתוּלוֹת שְׁנִית וּמִרְדֵּכִי
יָשָׁב בְּשַׁעַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ: אֵין אֶסְתֵּר מִגֵּדַת
מוֹלְדֹתָהּ וְאֶת־עַמָּהּ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה עָלֶיהָ
מִרְדֵּכִי וְאֶת־מֵאמֶר מִרְדֵּכִי אֶסְתֵּר עָשָׂה
כַּאֲשֶׁר הִיָּתָה בְּאִמְנָה אִתּוֹ: בְּיָמִים
הֵהֱם וּמִרְדֵּכִי יוֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ קִצָּף
בְּגִתָּן וְתָרַשׁ שְׁנֵי־סָרִיסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁמֶרֶי
הַסֹּף וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ לְשַׁלַּח יָד בַּמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֻׁרָשׁ:
וַיִּוָּדַע הַדָּבָר לְמִרְדֵּכִי וַיִּגֵּד לְאֶסְתֵּר
הַמֶּלֶכָּה וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר לַמֶּלֶךְ בְּשֵׁם

an effort to draw the secret of Esther's descent from her, Ahasuerus arranged for great festivities. He made a feast for her and she did not tell him; he remitted taxes in her name and she did not tell him; he sent gifts in her name and she still did not tell him (*Megillah 13a*).

19. — *And when the maidens were gathered together the second time. He [Ahasuerus] went and took counsel of Mordechai who said: The way to rouse a woman is to make her jealous; nevertheless, she did not tell' (Megilla 13a).*

Ahasuerus had mentioned to Esther that he wished he had a Jewish advisor like Daniel, the trusted servant of Nebuchadnezzar. Esther told him of a wise man who was a descendant of King Saul who would make a good mentor. The King appointed Mordechai to sit at the gate and judge the people.

Ahasuerus then took counsel of Mordechai as to how he could extract from Esther the secret of her origin. Mordechai suggested that the King once again organize a gathering of beautiful young maidens from throughout the kingdom. Esther, fearing that she would be replaced as Queen, would certainly divulge her secret.

Mordechai made this suggestion because he wanted to ascertain whether Esther's coronation was truly the will of Heaven. If the King could find no superior to Esther, Mordechai would be assured that her reign was part of G-d's plan (*Me'am Loez*).

Why did no Israelite or self-seeking opportunist divulge Esther's secret to the King? First, they would not have been believed, because every nation claimed her as its own; second, the feared Mordechai who was then the King's advisor (*M'nos Halevi*).

his officers and his servants — it was Esther's Banquet — and he proclaimed an amnesty for the provinces, and gave gifts worthy of the King.

¹⁹And when the maidens were gathered together the second time, and Mordechai sat at the King's gate, ²⁰(Esther still told nothing of her kindred or her people as Mordechai had instructed her; for Esther continued to obey Mordechai, just as when she was raised by him.)

Mordechai
foils a plot
against the
King

²¹In those days, while Mordechai was sitting at the King's gate, Bigsan and Seresh, two of the King's chamberlains of the guardians of the threshold, became angry and planned to assassinate King Ahasuerus. ²²The plot became known to Mordechai, who told it to Queen Esther, and Esther informed the

20. וְאֶת־מֵאֲמָר מֶרְדֳּכַי אֶסְתֵּר עָשָׂה — For Esther continued to obey Mordechai. [Even though she was now the Queen, she still maintained her filial piety and obedience].

21. בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ — At the King's gate. The commentators stress that Mordechai, sensing perilous times, left his position at the Sanhedrin and stationed himself at the King's gate where he would be the first to overhear any threats against the Jews and thereby thwart them (Me'am Loez).

The King's gate was not a gathering place for idlers, but the assembly of the dignitaries of the land (as we find all throughout the Scriptures that the elders, judges, and even kings sat at the gate of the city); for Mordechai was the most notable Jew in Shushan, and according to the Persian practice

was highly respected by the government (Torah Nation).

קָצַף — Became angry, at Mordechai's elevation in their stead (Midrash).

יָד לְשַׁלֵּחַ — To assassinate i.e. to poison the King (Rashi).

22. וַיִּנְדַּע הַדָּבָר לְמֶרְדֳּכַי — The plot became known to Mordechai. Being a member of the Sanhedrin Mordechai knew seventy languages. They spoke in their native Tarsian tongue in Mordechai's presence, not expecting him to understand them (Megilla 13b).

בְּשֵׁם מֶרְדֳּכַי — In Mordechai's name. 'Whoever repeats a thing in the name of him that said it brings redemption to the world' (Pirke Avos 6:6).

פֶּרֶק ב כג מֶרְדֵּכַי: וַיִּבְקֹשׁ הַדָּבָר וַיִּמָּצֵא וַיִּתְּלוּ
 שְׁנֵיהֶם עַל-עֵץ וַיִּכְתֹּב בְּסֵפֶר דְּבָרֵי
 הַיָּמִים לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ:

פֶּרֶק ג א אַחֲרַי | הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה גִּדְּלָהּ הַמֶּלֶךְ
 אֲחִישֵׁרוּשׁ אֶת-הַמֶּן בֶּן-הַמֶּדְתָּא הָאֲגָגִי
 וַיִּנְשָׂאֵהוּ וַיָּשֶׂם אֶת-כִּסְאוֹ מֵעַל כָּל-
 הַשָּׂרִים אֲשֶׁר אֵתוֹ: וְכָל-עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ
 אֲשֶׁר-בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ בָּרָעִים וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוִים

23. — *It was recorded.* i.e. the goodness which Mordechai did in behalf of the King (*Rashi*).

Some commentators explain that 'it was recorded' miraculously, by itself. That is why later [Chapter

6:2], when the insomniac King asked that the book of chronicles be read to him, the verse says 'it was found written' because Ahasuerus did not remember it being written (*Me'am Loez*).

III

1. אַחֲרַי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה — *After these things.* 'It was only after G-d had prepared for the future by establishing Mordechai's reputation that the monarch elevated Haman ...' (*Torah Nation*).

גִּדְּלָהּ הַמֶּלֶךְ — *The King promoted.* G-d caused Haman to be raised to power in order to make his eventual fall greater. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said: 'Should Haman be slain when he goes down to stop the building of the Temple, no one will know who he was. Let him, therefore, become great and famous and afterwards be hanged.' (*Midrash*)

הַמֶּן — *Haman*, a descendant of Agag, King of Amalek [*I Samuel* 15.9].

With the exception of Korach he was the richest man who ever lived, for he stole the treasures of the Judean kings and of the Temple (*Midrash*).

2. בָּרָעִים וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוִים — *Would bow down and prostrate....* Haman claimed divine powers for himself, therefore Mordechai would not bow down or prostrate himself (*Rashi*).

To make it manifest that the homage due him was of an idolatrous character, Haman had the image of an idol fastened to his

King in Mordechai's name. ²³The matter was investigated and corroborated, and they were both hanged on a gallows. It was recorded in the book of chronicles in the King's presence.

III

1-2

Haman is
advanced

¹ After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, the son of Hammedasa the Agagite, and advanced him; he set his seat above all the officers who were with him. ² All the King's servants at the King's gate, would bow down and prostrate themselves before Haman, for this is what the King

clothes, so that whoever bowed down before him worshipped an idol at the same time (*Midrash*)

[It is interesting to note that wherever else both words *בִּרְעִים* and *וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוִים*, 'bowing and prostrating' appear together in the Bible they always refer to obeisance to G-d. Haman was not content with simple obeisance from his subjects; he insisted upon the kind of *bowing* and *prostration* reserved for G-d, hence the *Midrash* tells us he wore an image to enhance the idolatrous nature of the homage he desired. Mordechai *לֹא יִכְרַע* — would not bow down or prostrate himself — under any circumstances—before Haman. (Quite possibly, though, Mordechai would acknowledge Haman in some form, but this did not suffice Haman's vanity.) As pointed out later [verse 5], when Haman saw that Mordechai *לֹא יִכְרַע* — would not bow down and

prostrate himself before Haman, he grew angry. He knew that Mordechai's refusal was religiously motivated and there was no point in punishing Mordechai alone — the whole Jewish people deserved punishment in Haman's eyes.

But when Haman formulated the decree to annihilate the Jews and Mordechai found out about it, the next time the two met [5:9], *וְלֹא-יָקָם, וְלֹא-יָזַע מִמֶּנּוּ*, Mordechai neither stood up nor stirred before him. This time, general *חֵמָה*, fury, against the Jews as a whole, was not enough. Haman directed his anger, specifically *עַל מֶרְדֵּכַי*, at Mordechai, the individual].

בִּיָּדְךָ צִוָּה-לּוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ — For this is what the King commanded. [Prostration before top-ranking officials was universal in the Orient. It seems strange, therefore, that the King had to give a special command for the benefit of Haman. It would seem that there was some reluctance on

פרק ג
 ג' ז
 לְהִמָּן כִּי־כֵן צִוָּה־לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ וּמֶרְדֵּכַי לֹא
 יִכְרַע וְלֹא יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה: וַיֹּאמְרוּ עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ
 אֲשֶׁר־בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְמֶרְדֵּכַי מִדּוּעַ אַתָּה
 עוֹבֵר אֶת מִצְוַת הַמֶּלֶךְ: וַיְהִי בְּאֶמְרָם
 אֵלָיו יוֹם וַיּוֹם וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּגִּידוּ
 לְהִמָּן לִרְאוֹת הַנַּעֲמָדוֹ וּבְרֵי מֶרְדֵּכַי כִּי־
 הִגִּיד לָהֶם אֲשֶׁר־הוּא יְהוּדִי: וַיֵּרָא הִמָּן
 כִּי־אֵין מֶרְדֵּכַי כֹּרַע וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לוֹ וַיִּמְלֹא
 הִמָּן חֲמָה: וַיָּבֹז בְּעֵינָיו לִשְׁלַח יָד
 בְּמֶרְדֵּכַי לְבַדּוֹ כִּי־הִגִּידוּ לוֹ אֶת־עַם
 מֶרְדֵּכַי וַיִּבְקֹשׁ הִמָּן לְהַשְׁמִיד אֶת־כָּל־
 הַיְּהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל־מְלָכוֹת אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ
 עִם מֶרְדֵּכַי: בַּחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן הוּא־חֹדֶשׁ
 נִסָּן בִּשְׁנַת שְׁתַּיִם עָשָׂרָה לַמֶּלֶךְ

the part of his subjects to do so necessitating a special order by the King.]

Haman was aware that Mordechai would not bow. He persuaded the King, therefore, to enact a law requiring everyone to bow down to him. Thus it would become obvious that Mordechai was disobeying a royal decree. The so-called felony would provide Haman with the provocation he desired to destroy the Jews (*Sfas Emes*).

But Mordechai would not bow down. Why is this verse written in future — יִכְרַע [lit. 'will bow']—rather than past tense—כָּרַע — [bowed]? The future tense signifies a decision not to bow under any circumstances rather than a decision taken for a particular occasion (*Shaar Bas Rabim*).

The *Midrash Chazis* states that,

at the request of Esther, Ahasuerus himself freed Mordechai from the obligation of prostrating himself before Haman. Rav Yonasan Eybeschuetz infers this explanation from the verse itself. The words — כִּי־כֵן צִוָּה־לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ — 'for this is what the King had commanded' apply to the end of the verse rather than the beginning. Read thus: *This is what the King had commanded concerning him: Mordechai should not bow, etc.* This also explains the use of the future tense יִכְרַע — 'should not bow.'

4. יוֹם וַיּוֹם — *Day after day*. At first they thought he was a gentile. When they discovered he was a Jew, they despised him and reported him to Haman. Others say that they hated Haman's demeaning behavior toward his fellow subjects and they,

had commanded concerning him. But Mordechai would not bow down or prostrate himself. ³ So the King's servants at the King's gate said to Mordechai, 'Why do you disobey the King's command?' ⁴ Finally, when they said this to him day after day and he did not heed them, they told Haman, to see whether Mordechai's words would avail; for he had told them that he was a Jew. ⁵ When Haman, himself, saw that Mordechai did not bow down and prostrate himself before him, then Haman was filled with rage. ⁶ However it seemed contemptible to him to lay hands on Mordechai alone, for they had made known to him the people of Mordechai. So Haman sought to destroy all the Jews—the people of Mordechai—who were throughout the entire kingdom of Ahasuerus. ⁷ In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in

Haman
plans the
destruction
of all the
Jews

too, considered not bowing down to him. They reported Mordechai as a test case to see *הַיֵּצְמִידוּ דְּבָרֵי מֶרְדֵּכַי* — *Whether Mordechai's words would avail.* If his actions were tolerated, they would become a precedent for the refusal of others to bow to Haman (*Me'am Loez*).

דְּבָרֵי מֶרְדֵּכַי — *Mordechai's words.* i.e., that, as a Jew, he could never prostrate himself idolatrously (*Rashi*).

5. *וַיֵּרָא הָמָן* — *Haman, himself, saw.* 'The use the wicked make of their eyes draws them to Gehinnom' (*Midrash*).

אֵין מֶרְדֵּכַי כֹּרַע — *Mordechai did not bow down.* Even when Haman removed the idol from his clothing (*Alshich*).

6. [The reaction of Haman to a personal affront is typical of the most rabid anti-Semites throughout the ages.]

בְּמֶרְדֵּכַי לִבְדּוּ — *On Mordechai alone.* When Haman became aware that Mordechai did not bow before him on religious grounds, he not only wanted to punish *בְּמֶרְדֵּכַי לִבְדּוּ* — Mordechai as an individual—for having embarrassed him, he also wished to take revenge upon him as a Jew, for Mordechai's refusal to bow was caused by his religious beliefs (*Akeidas Yitzchak*). [See commentary to verse 2.]

First he aimed at '*Mordechai alone*,' then at '*the people of Mordechai*'. Who are these? — the Rabbis; and finally at '*all the Jews*' (*Meg 13b*).

אחשורוש הפיל פור' הוא הגורל לפני
המן מיום|ליום ומחדש לחדש שנים-
עשר הוא-חדש אדר: ויאמר המן למלך
אחשורוש ישנו עם-אחד מפזר ומפזר
בין העמים בכל מדינות מלכותך
ודתיהם שנות מכל-עם ואת-דתהי המלך
אינם עשים ולמלך אין-שוה להניחם:
אם-על-המלך טוב יכתב לאבדם
ועשרת אלפים כבר-כסף אשקול על-

7. לפני הקן ... הפיל פור — *The lot was cast in Haman's presence.* [Literally: 'he cast a pur...' the 'he' presumably referring to one of Haman's servants.]

Haman would always cast lots to determine his course of action. He wanted to take revenge against the Jews immediately and he cast lots for the very next day—14 Nissan—but that day proved inauspicious. So he cast lots for every successive day and month until the 13th of Adar. He should have realized from this that G-d's will was to allow the Jews time to be redeemed, and therefore it says—לפני הקן [literally, before Haman] — i.e., that the lot was prepared before Haman rather than for the Jews — it would result in his destruction (*Malbim*).

Haman could not have drawn lots to determine Israel's 'unlucky' day — it is known that the fate of the Jews is not governed by luck—מזל—luck, or constellations. Rather, Haman cast the lots to determine when his own luck would be best, therefore — לפני הקן — before Haman specifically (*Vilna Gaon*).

8. ישנו עם-אחד — *There is a certain*

people. 'There was never a slanderer so skillful as Haman.'

Haman said to Ahasuerus: 'Come, let us destroy them.' 'I am afraid of their G-d,' the King answered, 'lest He do to me as He did to my predecessors.' Haman said: 'ושנים', they are asleep [i.e., "negligent"; a play on the word "ישנו"] of the precepts.' 'There are Rabbis among them [who do keep the precepts],' Ahasuerus replied. 'עם אחד — they are one people [and all hang together],' said Haman (*Meg. 13b*).

מפזר ומפזר — *Scattered and dispersed.* And hence defenseless and disunified. Haman told this to the King to assure him that he need not fear reprisals (*Yaaros D'vash*).

ודתיהם שנות — *Their laws are different.* 'They do not eat our food nor intermarry with us' (*Meg. 13b*).

ולמלך אין-שוה להניחם — *It is not befitting the King to tolerate them.* Haman said: 'They eat and drink and despise the throne. For if a fly falls into a Jew's cup, he throws out the fly and drinks the wine; but if his majesty were to touch his cup,

the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, pur (that is, the lot) was cast in the presence of Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar.

Haman
slanders the
Jews to the
King

⁸ Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus: 'There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your realm. Their laws are different from every other people's. They do not observe even the King's laws; therefore it is not befitting the King to tolerate them. ⁹ If it please the King, let it be recorded that they be destroyed; and I will pay ten thousand silver talents into the hands of

he would throw it to the ground and not drink from it' (Meg. 13b).

9. יִכְתֹּב — Let it be recorded, i.e., 'with a simple stroke of the pen' (Midrash).

Haman did not suggest that the King himself direct the destruction — but rather that it be 'recorded', i.e., that blanket permission be granted to destroy the Jews. The populace — as enemies of the Jews — will gladly carry out the extermination (Yosef Lekach).

יָעֲשֶׂה אֱלֹפִים כְּכֶרֶכֶסֶף — Ten thousand silver talents. [Haman felt that by giving away a huge sum of money equal to the value of the entire nation, he would be assured that his prey would not escape his clutches]:

Resh Lakish said: It was revealed before He who said, "Let the world come into existence" that Haman would count off shekalim for the right to destroy Israel. Therefore, He anticipated his shekalim with those of Israel [i.e., He ordained that the Jews should

give shekalim for a holy purpose before Haman gave shekalim for a fane purpose], as the Mishnah says, "On the first of Adar the announcement is made that the shekalim must be given" [G-d thus negated Haman's plan.] (Megillah 13b).

According to the Tosafos [Megillah 16a] the half-shekalim given by the 600-thousand adult Jewish males after the Exodus are equal to 10-thousand silver talents. This calculation is most difficult, however, because one talent equals 3,000 shekalim. The 600-thousand half-shekalim given by the 600-thousand Jews equal 300-thousand shekalim — only 100 talents!

To resolve this difficulty, we must say that the copyist erred in transcribing Tosafos. Tosafos wrote the abbreviation ח"ש which the copyist assumed to be חצי שקל, half a shekel. In reality, however, Tosafos meant חמשים שקלים, fifty shekalim, referring to the 50-shekel valuation ascribed to an adult male (Leviticus 27:3). If so, the 50-shekel

ידי עשי המלאכה להביא אל-גנזי
המלך: ויסר המלך את-טבעתו מעל ידו
ויתנה להמן בן-המדתא האגגי צרר
היהודים: ויאמר המלך להמן הכסף
נתון לך והעם לעשות בו בטוב בעיניך:
ויקראו ספרי המלך בחדש הראשון
בשלושה עשר יום בו ויכתב בכל-אשר
צנה המן אל אחשדרפני המלך ואל-
הפחות אשר על-מדינה ומדינה ואל
שרי עם ועם מדינה ומדינה בכתבה
ועם ועם כלשוננו בשם המלך אחשורש
נכתב ונחתם בטבעת המלך: ונשלוח
ספרים ביד הרצים אל-כל-מדינות
המלך להשמיד להרג ולאבד את-כל-

valuation per person of 600-thousand comes to 30-million shekalim which is exactly equal to the ten thousand silver talents given Ahasuerus by Haman [600,000 x 50 = 30,000,000 ÷ 3,000 = 10,000] (*Torah T'minah*) [*Kad Hakemech*].

The 10,000 silver talents corresponded to the 10,000 Jewish leaders exiled by Nebuchadnezzar. [See *II Kings* 24:14.] Haman thus reminded Ahasuerus that the fact that Nebuchadnezzar found it necessary to exile the Jews proves that they are an evil people worthy of destruction (*Me'am Loez*).

He also told the King not to be concerned with the loss of tax revenue that the Jews' destruction would bring. Haman more than compensated for that with his exorbitantly large bribe (*Vilna Gaon*).

[One ככר — talent contains 3,000 shekalim (see *Exodus* 35:24). A shekel contains approximately .80 ounces of silver. Thus, a talent of silver is equal to about 2,400 ounces. The price Haman was ready to pay for the right to exterminate the Jews, 10,000 talents, was 24 million ounces, or 750 tons of silver! Even in today's inflationary times, that is a huge fortune. We can only begin to imagine the enormity of the treasure by ancient standards.]

עשי המלאכה — *Those who perform the duties*. Haman promised Ahasuerus that the campaign will cost the King nothing; he will finance the entire annihilation and the perpetrators will perform this task with relish (*Malbim*).

III

10-13

The King
consents to
the
destruction
of the Jews

those who perform the duties for deposit in the King's treasuries.' ¹⁰ So the King took his signet ring from his hand, and gave it to Haman, the son of Hammedasa the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. ¹¹ Then the King said to Haman: 'The silver is given to you, the people also, to do with as you see fit.' ¹² The King's secretaries were summoned on the thirteenth day of the first month, and everything was written exactly as Haman had dictated, to the King's satraps, to the governors of every province, and to the officials of every people; each province in its own script, and to each people in its own language; in King Ahasuerus' name it was written, and it was sealed with the King's signet ring. ¹³ Letters were sent by courier to all the King's provinces, to destroy, to slay, and to exterminate all Jews, young and old,

10. טבעתו — His signet ring. Transference of the King's signet ring was symbolic that Haman now had full authority to act on the King's behalf (Rashi).

[The signet ring was used to seal official documents, and with it, in effect, Haman had autonomous control over the Jews].

'Our Rabbis said: Ahasuerus hated the Jews more than the wicked Haman. Usually the buyer gives a pledge to the seller, but here the seller gave the pledge' (Midrash).

11. 'When Haman offered a huge sum of money for the privilege of destroying the Jews throughout the Persian Empire, it was exactly what

Ahasuerus had hoped. "Like two men, one of whom had a mound in his field and the other had a hole in his field . . . Said the owner of the hole to the owner of the mound: Sell me your mound for money. Replied the other: Take it for nothing and welcome to it" (Megillah 14a; Torah Nation).

הכסף — The silver. The גימטריא [numerical value] of הכסף — 'silver' [165] equals that of העץ — 'the gallows' [a hint of Haman's ultimate end] (Midrash).

נתון לך — Is given to you. i.e., 'consider your money as having already been accepted by me and use it to execute your avowed purpose of annihilating the people in any way you wish' (M'nos Halevi).

פרק ג
יד-טו
 הַיְּהוּדִים מְנַעַר וְעַד-זָקֵן טַף וְנָשִׁים בָּיוֹם
 אֶחָד בְּשִׁלּוּשָׁה עָשָׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ שְׁנֵים-עָשָׂר
 הוּא-חֹדֶשׁ אָדָר וּשְׁלָלָם לְכוּז: פִּתְשָׁגָן
 הִכְתֵּב לְהַנְתֵּן דָּת בְּכָל-מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה
 גָּלוּי לְכָל-הָעַמִּים לִהְיוֹת עֲתִידִים לְיוֹם
 הַזֶּה: הָרָצִים יֵצְאוּ רְחוּפִים בְּדַבַּר הַמֶּלֶךְ
 וְהָדָת נִתְּנָה בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה וְהַמֶּלֶךְ וְהָמָן
 יִשְׁבוּ לִשְׁתוֹת וְהָעִיר שׁוֹשֶׁן נְבוּכָה:

פרק ד
א
 וּמַרְדֳּכָי יָדַע אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשָׂה וַיִּקְרָע
 מַרְדֳּכָי אֶת-בְּגָדָיו וַיִּלְבֹּשׁ שָׂק וָאֶפֶר וַיֵּצֵא

14. — *The copes ... published to all [the] peoples.* Haman was afraid to openly and publicly decree the annihilation of the entire Jewish people. In the confidential decree to 'the satraps, governors, and high officials,' [verses 12 and 13], he clearly spelled out that the purpose was to utterly destroy the Jews on the 13th of Adar. On the *the copes*, the *copies of the documents*, — which were publicly displayed in every town square and *גָּלוּי לְכָל-הָעַמִּים* published to all the peoples, however, it was written only that on the thirteenth of Adar they must all be prepared for a military action whose nature will then be revealed. That is why the next verse follows with *וְהָעִיר שׁוֹשֶׁן נְבוּכָה* — but the city of Shushan was bewildered, for no one knew who would be involved in this action (Vilna Gaon).

15. — *Went forth quickly.* There were several reasons for the strange haste in publishing a decree that would not be executed for eleven months. Haman was afraid that the fickle King would have a change of heart. He wanted to prolong the agony of the Jews throughout the kingdom by telling them of the impending massacre so far in advance (*Rav Galico*).

G-d desired a lapse of so many months to give the children of Israel a chance to repent (*Me'am Loez*).

— *The King and Haman sat down to drink.* [To celebrate the decree of annihilation].

According to the *Midrash*, Haman deliberately intended to intoxicate the King out of fear that he might reconsider the edict before the couriers were securely on their way.

III

14-15

children and women, in a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their possessions. ¹⁴ The copies of the document were to be promulgated in every province, and be published to all peoples, that they should be ready for that day. ¹⁵ The couriers went forth hurriedly by order of the King, and the edict was distributed in Shushan the capitol. The King and Haman sat down to drink; but the city of Shushan was bewildered.

IV

I

¹ Mordechai learned of all that had been done; and Mordechai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth with ashes. He went out into the midst of

וְהָעִיר שׁוֹשָׁן נִבְּוּדָה — But the city of Shushan was bewildered. The Jews cried and wailed loudly while, simultaneously, the Persians rejoiced at the new decree. Listeners were bewildered trying to differentiate between the cries of anguish and the shouts of joy (*Me'am Loez*).

'If a Jew went out to the market to shop, a Persian would taunt him and say: "Tomorrow I am going to kill you and plunder your property" (*Midrash*)

Scarcely had the edict been promulgated against the Jews when all sorts of misfortunes began to happen to Persians in the city. Women hanging out their wash to dry on the roofs of houses fell to their death; men going to draw water fell into the wells and drowned. While Ahasuerus and Haman were making merry in the palace, the city was thrown into consternation and mourning (*Panim Acherim*).

IV

1. וּמִרְכָּבֵי יָדַע — And Mordechai learned. He was told in a dream (*Rashi*). He didn't learn it via רֹחַ — the holy spirit, because Shushan was in turmoil and prophesy dwells only amidst joy

(*Yismach Lev*).

Others hold that Elijah the Prophet told him (*Midrash*; *Rav Eleazar of Worms*).

וַיִּקְרַע...אֶת-בְּגָדָיו — He tore his

פָּרַק ד' בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר וַיִּזְעַק וְעָקָה גְדוּלָּהּ וּמָרָה:
 בִּד־ וַיָּבֹא עַד לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי אֵין לָבֹא
 ג אֶל־שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ בִּלְבוּשׁ שָׂק: וּבְכָל־
 מְדִינָהּ וּמְדִינָהּ מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר דְּבַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ
 וְדָתוֹ מֵגִיעַ אֲבָל גְּדוֹל לַיהוּדִים וְצוּם
 וּבְכִי וּמִסְפָּד שָׂק וְאַפֵּר יַצַּע לָרַבִּים:
 וְתָבוֹאִינָה נַעֲרוֹת אֶסְתֵּר וְסָרִיסֶיהָ וַיִּגִּידוּ
 ד יֵתֵר י' לָהּ וַתִּתְחַלְחַל הַמֶּלֶכָּה מְאֹד וַתִּשְׁלַח
 בְּגָדִים לַהֲלָבִישׁ אֶת־מְרֹדֶכִי וּלְהָסִיר

clothes, etc., as a manifestation of mourning and grief. When Mordechai learned of the plan, he no longer cared to sit in royal attire at the King's gate. He tore off his royal robes and put on sackcloth as if to say 'My place is now with the multitude' (*P'dus Yaakov*).

— *And cried loudly and bitterly*. Why did Mordechai cry out — did he think that silent prayer is less effective? Chana whispered to herself as it says [I. Sam. 1:13] וַחֲנָה הָיָה מְדַבֵּרֶת עַל לִבָּהּ *Chana prayed silently*, and yet G-d heard her, as the episode concludes: *The G-d of Israel will grant your request.* . . .

— *Mordechai cried out and said:* אָבִי יִצְחָק — *My ancestor Isaac!* What have you done to me? Esau cried out before you and you heeded his cries and blessed him. Now we are to be sold and slaughtered [by Haman, a descendant of Esau]! Therefore he cried out (*Yalkut Shimoni, Panim Acherim*).

2. — *Until the front of the King's gate*. Mordechai surely knew the rule that 'It was forbidden to enter the King's

gate clothed in sackcloth.' Had he wanted to enter the palace he surely would have appeared in his regular attire. Rather, his purpose was to publicize his cause to Esther and seek compassion — through fasting and prayer — from G-d. He might have been expected to first appear in his official attire to communicate the facts of the emergency to Esther so that she could attempt to intercede with the King. Only then should he have donned sackcloth to seek divine intervention. Mordechai, however, chose the opposite course. He placed his faith in G-d (*Yosef Lekach*).

3. — *In every province*. The further from Shushan, the greater was the mourning. The Jews in Shushan — living in close proximity to the King — felt assured they would not be slaughtered before the destined 13th of Adar. Not so those Jews who lived in the provinces. There, away from the King, the danger was very real that upon receipt of the edict, the populace would begin the slaughter (*Yad Hamelech*).

— *Most of them* שָׂק וְאַפֵּר יַצַּע לָרַבִּים

IV

2-4

The
mourning of
the Jews

the city, and cried loudly and bitterly. ² He came until the front of the King's gate, for it was forbidden to enter the King's gate clothed with sackcloth. ³ (In every province, wherever the King's command and his decree extended, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, and weeping, and wailing; most of them lying in sackcloth and ashes.)

⁴ And Esther's maids and chamberlains came and told her about it, and the Queen was greatly distressed; she sent garments to clothe Mordechai so that he

lying in sackcloth and ashes. [Literally: 'sackcloth and ashes were spread out under the many.']

'Many', רבים, is open to several interpretations:

According to R. Moshe Arama: רבים—'many', implies 'the most prominent,' i.e. the rich, Persianized Jews shared the danger of annihilation with their poorer, more pious brethren. Also, רבים were the גְּדוּלִים—the religious leaders who were the first to mourn publicly; The Midrash *Panim Acherim* states that absolutely everyone slept on sackcloth. A novel interpretation of רבים is offered by Yosef Lekach: רבים means "public"—in the sense of רשות הַרְבִּים, 'public domain;' i.e. the mourning took place in public, rather than in private.

4. וַיִּגְדְּרוּ לָהּ—And they told her, i.e. about Mordechai and his sackcloth (*Alshich*).

Esther had not yet revealed her origins, but her interest in Mordechai—who had always inquired about her welfare—was well-known throughout the palace (*Yosef Lekach*).

Esther was very modest and she

appreciated her privacy. That was why she had not heard about the decree (*Rav Galico*).

וַתִּתְחַלְחַל — greatly distressed. [literally: 'became full of hollows.'] Rav said: she became a נִדָּה — ritually unclean; Rav Yirmiya said her stomach was loosened' (*Meg. 15a*).

Some say she was pregnant, and upon hearing the news she miscarried, never to give birth again; others say she conceived only once after this miscarriage and gave birth to Darius (*Midrash; Panim Acherim*).

Esther instantly realized that Mordechai's public mourning could not have been the result of a personal bereavement, or he would not have appeared in public. Realizing that he was bewailing a public calamity, she was greatly distressed at the fact that Mordechai had not informed her personally (*M'nos Halevi; Alshich*).

וַתִּשְׁלַח בְּגָדִים — And she sent garments, so that, properly attired, Mordechai could enter the palace to speak with her personally (*Alshich*).

פֶּרֶק ר ה שָׁקוּ מֵעֲלָיו וְלֹא קָבַל: וַתִּקְרָא אֶסְתֵּר
 ה־ח לְהִתֵּן מִסְרִיטֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר הָעֲמִיד
 לִפְנֵיהָ וַתִּצְוֶהוּ עַל-מֶרְדֵּכַי לִדְעַת מַה-זֶּה
 ו ועל-מה-זֶּה: וַיֵּצֵא הֶתֶר אֶל-מֶרְדֵּכַי אֶל-
 רְחוֹב הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר-הַמֶּלֶךְ:
 ו וַיַּגִּד-לוֹ מֶרְדֵּכַי אֵת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר קָרָהוּ וְאֵת
 פֶּרֶשֶׁת הַכֶּסֶף אֲשֶׁר אָמַר הֶמָּן לְשָׂקוֹל
 עַל-גִּנְזֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בִּיהוּדִים לְאַבְדָּם: וְאֵת-
 יִתְרִי ח פֶּתֶשֶׁן בְּתַב־הֶדֶת אֲשֶׁר-נָתַן בְּשׁוּשַׁן
 לְהַשְׁמִידָם נָתַן לוֹ לְהִרְאוֹת אֶת-אֶסְתֵּר
 וּלְהַגִּיד לָהּ וּלְצִוּוֹת עָלֶיהָ לָבוֹא אֶל-
 הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַתְחַנֵּן-לוֹ וּלְבַקֵּשׁ מִלִּפְנֵיו עַל-

but he would not accept them. He did not want to stop praying even for a moment lest he appear to substitute reliance on a human being for dependence on the mercy of G-d (*Malbim*).

5. הֶתֶר — *Hasach*. He was a great man, Esther's confidant, one who could keep secrets, and whom no one would suspect or dare to question about his mission (*Alshich, Malbim*).

Rav said: *Hasach* was Daniel. Why was he called *Hasach*? Because he was degraded [תְּתַכְוֶהוּ] from his position [which he held during the reigns of Belshazzar, Darius and Cyrus — (*Rashi*)] (*Meg. 15a*).

Another reason he was called *Hasach* was that he made decisions [חֲתָךְ] on affairs of state (*Meg. 15a; Midrash*).

מה־זֶּה וְעַל-מַה־זֶּה — *What this was about and why*. [lit. 'what this was and why it was.'] i.e. what the edict was and for what great sin were the

Jews being punished (*Alshich, Yosef Lekach*).

Esther told him: 'Go and say to Mordechai that never in their history have the Jews been in such a crisis as this ... Have the Jews perhaps denied the Tablets of which it is written, הֵם וּמִזֶּה הֵם כְּתוּבִים, *on the one side and on the other side* [lit. 'on this and on this'] were they written [Exodus 32:15] (*Meg. 15a; Midrash*).

6. רְחוֹב הָעִיר — *City square*. i.e. *Hasach* walked roundabout through the city square in order to make it seem that he 'happened' to meet Mordechai by coincidence (*Alshich*).

They purposely spoke in the public square so that no one could spy on them and overhear their conversation. Furthermore, no one would suspect them of speaking about vital matters pertaining to the King in such a place (*Me'am Loez*).

7. וַיַּגִּד-לוֹ מֶרְדֵּכַי — *And Mordechai*

might take off his sackcloth; but he would not accept them.

⁵ Then Esther summoned Hasach, one of the King's chamberlains whom he had appointed to attend her, and ordered him to go to Mordechai, to learn what this was about and why. ⁶ So Hasach went out to Mordechai unto the city square, which was in front of the King's gate, ⁷ and Mordechai told him of all that had happened to him, and all about the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay to the royal treasuries for the annihilation of the Jews. ⁸ He also gave him a copy of the text of the decree which was distributed in Shushan for their destruction — so that he might show it to Esther and inform her, bidding her to go to the King, to appeal to him, and to

Mordechai
asks Esther
to intercede

told him, at great length (*Alshich*).

He told him everything — how his refusal to prostrate himself before Haman resulted in the edict, but that its underlying cause was the sin of the Jews in partaking of Ahasuerus' feast (*M'nos Halevi, Alshich, Meam Loez*).

אֲשֶׁר קָרְהוּ — *That had happened to him.* Mordechai said to Hasach: "Go tell her 'The descendant of karahu, קָרְהוּ, [lit. 'met him'. Amalek is meant] of whom it is said אֲשֶׁר קָרָה בְּדָרֶךְ "Who he met thee [kar'cha] by the way [Deut. 25:18]. (*Midrash*).

פְּרָשָׁה — *The sum of money.* Mordechai conveyed the message that far more than mere talk between Haman and the King resulted in the decree; a great sum of money was involved (*R. Eleazar of Worms*).

Mordechai also wanted to

impress Esther that the King could not be 'bought off' with money, because Haman offered Ahasuerus 10,000 silver talents and the King was reluctant to accept this huge sum (*Divrei Shaul*).

בְּיְהוּדִים לְאַבְנֵם — *For the annihilation of the Jews.* Mordechai revealed to Esther that, although the public copies of the decree published in the outer provinces mentioned only 'readiness' and made no mention of 'annihilation' [see Commentary to 3:14]; the true intent was annihilation (*Vilna Gaon*).

לְהַשְׁמִיכֵם. — *for their destruction.* Apparently only the Shushan copy of the edict mentioned 'destruction' — those copies published in the other provinces made no mention of 'destruction' (see above on 3:14) (*Alshich*).

The word לְהַשְׁמִיכֵם — *'for their*

פֶּרֶק ד ט עֲמָה: וַיָּבֹא הֶתֶךָ וַיַּגֵּד לְאַסְתֵּר אֶת דְּבָרֵי
טִיד י מֶרְדֵּכַי. וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר לִהְתֵּךָ וּתְצִוְהוּ
יא אֶל־מֶרְדֵּכַי: כָּל־עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְעַם
מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ יוֹדְעִים אֲשֶׁר כָּל־אִישׁ
וְאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר־יָבֹא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל־הַחֲצֵר
הַפְּנִימִית אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יִקְרָא אַחַת דָּתוֹ
לְהִמִּית לְבָד מֵאֲשֶׁר יוֹשִׁיט־לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ
אֶת־שִׁרְבִיט הַזֶּהב וְחִיָּה וְאֲנִי לֹא
נִקְרָאתִי לָבֹא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ זֶה שְׁלוֹשִׁים
יב יוֹם: וַיַּגִּידוּ לְמֶרְדֵּכַי אֶת דְּבָרֵי אֶסְתֵּר:
יג וַיֹּאמֶר מֶרְדֵּכַי לְהֵשִׁיב אֶל־אֶסְתֵּר אֶל־
תְּדַמִּי בַּנֶּפֶשׁ לְהַמְלִיט בֵּית־הַמֶּלֶךְ מִכָּל־
יד הַיְּהוּדִים: כִּי אִם־הִחָרַשׁ תַּחֲרִישִׁי בְּעַת

destruction', was not part of the document. This word was Mordechai's own addition as a natural inference (Yosef Lekach).

על־עמָה — *for her people*. The time was now ripe for Esther to divulge the identity of her people and thus win the King's mercy (Alshich).

9. וַיַּגֵּד לְאַסְתֵּר — *And told Esther*. He fully elaborated upon the grave situation of the Jews as related by Mordechai (M'nos Halevi).

10. וּתְצִוְהוּ אֶל־מֶרְדֵּכַי — *To return to Mordechai with this message*. [lit. 'she commanded him to Mordechai'] knowing that her reply was not favorable to Mordechai, Hasach might not want to convey it. Esther, therefore, commanded him to convey it (Alshich).

Esther also cautioned Hasach to be very diplomatic in conveying her response, seeing that Mordechai was in great anguish (D'na Pashra).

[But, as explained in commentary to verse 12, Hasach did not personally deliver this recalcitrant response].

11. כָּל־עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ — *All the King's servants*.

Esther explained to Mordechai why his request was impossible: 'Everyone knows the law against approaching the King unsummoned, hence feigning ignorance of the law would be no excuse for me. Moreover, the prohibition was not an expression of personal preference on the part of King Ahasuerus; it was a public law known by *עַם מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ*, the people of the King's provinces — so transgression would be a public offense, like the sin of Vashti.' Esther continued that there was no exception to the law of *אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה*, man or woman. Even were the King to forgive her by extending his *שִׁרְבִיט הַזֶּהב* — gold scepter — it

plead with him for her people.

⁹ Hasach came and told Esther what Mordechai had said. ¹⁰ Then Esther told Hasach to return to Mordechai with this message: ¹¹ 'All the King's servants and the people of the King's provinces are well aware that if anyone, man or woman, approaches the King in the inner court without being summoned, there is but one law for him: that he be put to death; except for the person to whom the King shall extend the gold scepter so that he may live. Now I have not been summoned to come to the King for the past thirty days.'

¹² They related Esther's words to Mordechai. ¹³ then Mordechai said to reply to Esther: 'Do not imagine that you will be able to escape in the King's palace any more than the rest of the Jews. ¹⁴ For if you persist in keeping silent at a time like this, relief

would be a most inopportune time to plead also on behalf of her people because she would already owe her life solely to the King's mercy.

Her alternate suggestion was to take a more secure and less risky approach: 'It is already שלוש ימים, *thirty days*, that I was not summoned by the King. I will definitely be summoned within the next few days; at that advantageous time I will plead for my people. It is best to wait' (*Malbim*).

12. וַיַּגִּידוּ לְמֹרְדֵכָי — *They related to Mordechai*. Hasach was not the one to deliver the recalcitrant message. Reluctant to deliver Esther's negative response, he sent another in his place. (*Meg. 15a*).

Others say that Haman grew suspicious of Hasach and had him murdered. (*Me'am Loez*).

13. [Mordechai warns Esther of the catastrophe of placing her personal safety first.]

אֶל-תִּדְמִי בְנַפְשֶׁךָ — *Do not imagine*. [Literally: *form an idea in your soul*] i.e. Mordechai said: 'You may, by some remote twist of fate, manage to save your body. But how will you save your soul?' (*M'nos Halevi*).

14. אַם-יִהְיֶה שִׁכְחָה — *If you persist in keeping silent*. 'If you keep silent now and refrain from pleading for your nation, in the end you will be silent in the time to come and you will not be able to justify yourself, because you had the opportunity of doing good in your lifetime and you did not do it. And do you imagine that the Holy One, Blessed be He, will abandon

הזאת רוח והצלה יעמוד ליהודים
ממקום אחר ואת ובית-אביך תאבדו
ומי יודע אם-לעת כזאת הגעת
למלכות. ותאמר אסתר להשיב אל-
מֶרְדֵּכָי: לך בְּנוֹס אֶת-כָּל-הַיְּהוּדִים
הַנִּמְצָאִים בְּשׁוֹשָׁן וְצוּמוֹ עָלַי וְאֶל-
תֹּאכְלוּ וְאֶל-תִּשְׁתּוּ שְׁלֹשַׁת יָמִים לַיְלָה

טו

טו

Israel? — In any case, He will rise up and deliver them (*Midrash*).

ממקום אחר — *from some other place*. [Obviously a reference to divine help, but deliberately avoiding the use of G-d's Name. (See *Overview*).]

According to another interpretation:

Mordechai told Esther that G-d has many means at His disposal to save the Jews. G-d could send a foreign King to war with Ahasuerus and kill him. Thus, those living in the palace, would be in the most imminent danger. He therefore warned her: רוח והצלה יעמוד ליהודים ממקום אחר — *deliverance will come to the Jews from some other place*, i.e. G-d will send a foreign King, and thus will the Jews be saved, ואת ובית-אביך תאבדו — *while you and your father's house will perish*, because as a Queen you will be murdered along with the King, ומי יודע אם-לעת כזאת הגעת למלכות i.e. *and who knows if you will still be reigning at this time next year?* (*Me'am Loez*; *Ma'amar Mordechai*; see also *Yosef Lekach*; *Rashi*).

Why did Mordechai insist that Esther endanger her life by going into the King's chambers immediately when there was nearly a

full year left before the execution of the decree? Furthermore, by waiting just a little longer Esther would probably have been summoned by the King and could have pleaded her cause more effectively without endangering her life. — Mordechai knew the decree was sealed in Heaven, but אליהו הנביא — *Elijah the Prophet* revealed to him that he could avert the decree by repentance and prayer. Mordechai, therefore, roused the Children of Israel to full repentance. He knew that G-d would never turn away prayers uttered in such fervent purity — especially during the month of Nissan when G-d was particularly compassionate toward the Jews. He was apprehensive that, as time passed, the Jews would lose hope and their spirits would flag. Thus, he told Esther: 'If you persist in maintaining your silence at such an opportune time, then help will come from elsewhere and another such opportunity may never arise again' (*Me'am Loez*).

ומי יודע אם-לעת כזאת הגעת למלכות — *And who knows whether it was just for such a time as this that you attained the royal position!* [Our translation follows *Ibn Ezra*: 'Who knows? Maybe you attained the royal position solely for this oppor-

IV *and deliverance will come to the Jews from some*
15-16 *other place, while you and your father's house will*
perish. And who knows whether it was just for such
a time as this that you attained the royal position!'

Esther agrees to go unsummoned to the King
15 *The Esther sent this return answer to Mordechai:* **16** *'Go, assemble all the Jews to be found in Shushan, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day; I, with my maids, will fast*

tunity of being instrumental in saving the Jews.']

Esther had wanted to delay going to the King (see commentary on verse 11). Mordechai therefore said: "This opportunity cannot be delayed. Do not delude yourself into thinking you can achieve this salvation in a few days, for you have been elevated to the throne by G-d just for this very moment." (Malbim).

Rashi, Alshich and Yosef Lekach undersand **לַעֵת בָּאוֹת** to mean: a similar time next year, i.e., the day of the slaughter. Hence: Who knows if you will still retain your royal position a year from now [i.e., therefore 'hurry and be instrumental in saving the Jews now, for by next year you may yourself be deposed, for one reason or another, and powerless to save them'].

An interesting interpretation is given by Rav Galico: 'Who knows if your being Queen at that time will exempt you from Haman's decree?

15. לְהַשִּׁיב — *This return answer.* Esther answered in a soothing manner, that she understands her special role and obligation. She is not concerned with self-preservation; the fate of all the Jews

is foremost in her mind. She only asks for a few days time to take advantage of this most auspicious occasion to present the facts of Haman's slander and expose him (M'nos Halevi).

16. כָּנוּס — *Assemble.* Esther said. "Let us contradict Haman's slander [3:8] that the Jews are 'scattered and dispersed'; let us assemble all the Jews in unity and determination" (M'nos Halevi).

בְּשׁוּשָׁן — *In Shushan.* Esther limited the assembly to the Jews in Shushan because it would have been impossible to assemble Jews living further away on such short notice (Vilna Gaon).

וְצוּמוֹ עָלַי — *And fast for me.* Usually the most important part of a fast-day is prayer and charity. But here the fast was atonement for the sin of enjoying Ahasuerus' banquet. The essence of this fast, therefore, was abstinence from food and drink (Me'am Loez).

שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים — *For three days.* 'This was an unprecedented effort of prayer, never before or after equalled. A tremendous wave of repentance swept over the Jews everywhere then they heard the stunning decree of the wicked ruler and

פָּרַק ר יוֹם גַּם-אֲנִי וְנִעַרְתִּי אֶצִּים כֵּן וּבִכֵּן אָבוֹא
אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר לֹא-כָדַת וְכֹאשֶׁר יו
אֲבִדְתִּי אֲבִדְתִּי: וַיַּעֲבֹר מֶרְדֳּכָי וַיַּעַשׂ כְּכֹל יו
אֲשֶׁר-צִוְתָה עָלָיו אֶסְתֵּר:

פָּרַק ה א וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וּתְלַבֵּשׁ אֶסְתֵּר
מַלְכוּת וַתַּעֲמֹד בַּחֲצַר בֵּית-הַמֶּלֶךְ א
הַפְּנִימִית נֹכַח בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּלֶךְ יוֹשֵׁב

his Amaleki executioner. The spirit of Israel was so greatly renewed thereby that "they accepted the Torah anew in the days of Achashverosh" (*Shabbos 88a*); and G-d accepted their prayers (*Torah Nation*).

And if I perish, I perish — *And if I perish, I perish* [literally: 'What I have lost, I have lost'].

Esther said: 'Just as I have forfeited the sanctity of my soul by marrying a non-Jew, I now will sacrifice my body to save Israel' (*Alshich*).

The *Talmud* [*Meg. 15a*], holding that Esther was Mordechai's wife [see Commentary to 2:7] quotes Esther as saying to Mordechai: 'As I am lost to my father's house, so shall I be lost to thee' [i.e., by submitting voluntarily to Ahasuerus she would be forever forbidden to her legitimate husband, Mordechai. This is according to Torah law that forbids a wife to her husband if she voluntarily had relations with another man (see *Overview*).

17. וַיַּעֲבֹר — *then left*. The Hebrew וַיַּעֲבֹר can mean either 'transgressed' or 'crossed over.' Rav, [in *Talmud, Meg. 15a*] holds that Mordechai transgressed the law by fasting on *Yom Tov* because the three fast days included the first day of *Passover*. Samuel held that the word means 'crossed.' i.e. he crossed the river which divided Shushan the capitol from the city of Shushan (*Rav Yonasan Eybeschultz*).

Mordechai protested to Esther, 'But these three days of fasting include the first day of *Passover*?' And she replied: 'If there is no Israel why should there be a *Passover*!' (*Midrash*).

Mordechai prayed to G-d: 'It is fully known before the throne of Thy glory, O Lord of all worlds, that I did not act from pride in not bowing down to Haman. Rather, through fear of Thee I do so — lest I assign Thy honor to flesh and blood; I was unwilling to bow down before anyone but Thee. For who am I that I should not bow down to

also. Then I will go in to the King though it's unlawful. And if I perish, I perish.' ¹⁷ Mordechai then left and did exactly as Esther had commanded him.

V

1

¹ Now it came to pass on the third day, Esther donned royalty and stood in the inner court of the King's palace facing the King's house while the

Haman for the salvation of Thy people Israel? For that, I would even kiss his shoe latchet. Now therefore, our G-d, deliver us, we pray Thee, from his hand and let him fall into the pit which he has dug and let him be caught in the snare he has hidden for the feet of Thy saints, and let the swine know that Thou has not forgotten the promise Thou has

made to us' (Lev. 26:44):

“בְּהִיּוֹתָם בָּאָרֶץ אֹיְבֵיהֶם לֹא־מֵאַסְתִּים וְלֹא־יִגְעֲלֻתָּם לְכַלּוֹתָם לְהַפֵּר בְּרִיתִי אִתָּם כִּי אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיהֶם.”

'When they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break My covenant with them; for I am the Lord their (Megillah 15a).

V

1. בְּיוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי — Third day [of the fast (M'nos Halevi)]. It was the first day of Passover (Rashi).

מַלְכוּת — Royalty. i.e. 'royal apparel.' Until now, Esther detested royal robes, but now that Mordechai impressed upon her the importance of the mission, and how the salvation of Israel was dependent on her, she consented to make the best possible impression and she donned her most magnificent royal garments (M'nos Halevi).

According to the Talmud: The word 'royalty' refers not to clothing

but to spiritual royalty, i. e. the holy [prophetic] spirit clothed her (Megillah 15a).

וַתֵּעַמַּד — And stood. i. e. Esther stopped and prayed. עֲמִידָה — 'standing' always indicates 'praying' (M'nos Halevi)

'Esther arrived at the inner court facing the King and stood before him. The King was sitting on his royal throne ... and when he noticed Esther standing in front of him, he was furiously angry because she had broken his law by coming before him without being

פרקה
ב-ה
על-כִּסֵּא מַלְכוּתוֹ בְּבֵית הַמַּלְכוּת גִּבַּח
פָּתַח הַכִּיט: וַיְהִי כִרְאוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-
אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה עֹמֶדֶת בְּחֹצֵר נִשְׁאַה חֵן
בְּעֵינָיו וַיּוֹשֶׁט הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאַסְתֵּר אֶת-
שִׁרְבִיט הַזֶּהָב אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדוֹ וַתִּקְרַב אֶסְתֵּר
וַתִּגַּע בְּרֹאשׁ הַשִּׁרְבִיט: וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ הַמֶּלֶךְ
מִה-לָּךְ אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה וּמִה-בִּקְשָׁתְךָ
עַד-חֲצֵי הַמַּלְכוּת וַיִּנָּתֶן לָהּ: וַתֹּאמֶר
אֶסְתֵּר אִם-עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב יָבוֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ
וְהָמָן הַיּוֹם אֶל-הַמִּשְׁתָּה אֲשֶׁר-עָשִׂיתִי
לוֹ: וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ מִהֲרִי אֶת-הָמָן לַעֲשׂוֹת

called ... Esther grew frightened ... but the Al-mighty gave her grace in the King's eyes and invested her with new beauty and new charm. The King then rose from his throne, ran to Esther and embraced her. "Esther, my queen," he said. "Why do you tremble? This law does not apply to you — you are my beloved and my companion."

He also said to her: "When I saw you, why did you not speak to me?"

"Your Majesty," replied Esther, "when I beheld you, I was overcome by your high dignity"'. (Midrash)

2. שִׁרְבִיט הַזֶּהָב — *Gold scepter*. The scepter is symbolic of the rulership. By extending the scepter, the King demonstrates that he is taking her under his protection (*Me'am Loez*).

According to the Talmud (*Meg. 15b*) an angel was sent to stretch out the gold scepter for Ahasuerus. Once Esther touched the scepter, the King was no longer doing her a favor because he had thereby sym-

bolically welcomed her into his domain (*Eshkol Hakofer*).

3. מִה-לָּךְ אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה — '*What is your petition, Queen Esther?*' [Lit. 'What is to you....']. The King noticed that Esther's face was pale from fasting, and he realized that Esther's sudden, unsummoned appearance, potentially a capital offense, indicated that she had a most urgent request. Either she was being unbearably harassed by someone, or her petition was on behalf of others; whichever it was, it could only be of the most serious nature imaginable. He offered to fulfill her request whatever the case (*Vilna Gaon*).

חֲצֵי הַמַּלְכוּת — *Half the kingdom*. Esther could have up to half the kingdom — but not the whole kingdom. Nor could she request something that would disturb the stability of the kingdom: The rebuilding of the Temple (*Meg. 15b*).

V King was sitting on his throne in the throne room
2-5 facing the chamber's entrance. ² When the King
 Esther goes noticed Queen Esther standing in the court, she won
 before the his favor. The King extended to Esther the gold
 King scepter that was in his hand, and Esther approached
 and touched the tip of the scepter.

³ The King said to her: 'What is your petition, Queen
 Esther? Even if it be half the kingdom, it shall be granted
 you.' ⁴ Esther said: 'If it please the King, let the King
 Esther lays a and Haman come today to the banquet that I have
 trap for prepared for him.' ⁵ Then the King commanded: 'Tell
 Haman to hurry and fulfill Esther's wish.' So the King

4. יָבוֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהָמָן — *Let the King
 and Haman come.*

Esther answered the King that, indeed, she had something very important, to ask of him, but that this was not the right time. It would be more opportune if he were to visit her. During a social visit at her banquet he would be more relaxed. Then she would present her request. The King ordered his servants to 'hurry Haman' so the banquet could start early thus allowing Esther to make her request and relieve her of her sadness (*Vilna Gaon*).

The Sages offered many reasons for Esther's desire to have Haman present when she petitioned the King. Among them:

To set a trap for him and surprise him; so that he would have no opportunity to form a conspiracy and rebel; since Ahasuerus was fickle and likely to change his mind she wanted Haman present; so that Ahasuerus would impetuously commit himself; she was purposely showing a great interest in Haman

to arouse the King's jealousy and to disarm Haman; to arouse fears in the hearts of Israel that Esther was catering to Haman — thus they would repent and pray rather than be complacent in the knowledge that they had a 'sister' in the palace (*Meg. 15b*).

The first Hebrew letters of the words יָבוֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהָמָן הַיּוֹם form the Holy Name of G-d. This is one of the several places throughout the Megillah where G-d's Name is indirectly hinted. [For reasons that G-d's Name is not explicitly mentioned in the Megillah; see *Overview*.] (*Rabbeinu Bachyai ben Asher*).

5. מְהֵרָה — *Hurry.* Since Esther had already prepared the banquet, Ahasuerus insisted that she not be kept waiting (*Shaarei Binah*).

The King was also concerned that Haman might leave — so he ordered him taken even against his will, to do Esther's bidding (*Megillas Sesarim*).

אֶת־דָּבָר אֶסְתֵּר וַיָּבֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהָמֶן אֶל־
הַמִּשְׁתָּה אֲשֶׁר־עָשְׂתָה אֶסְתֵּר: וַיֹּאמֶר
הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאֶסְתֵּר בְּמִשְׁתֵּה הַיַּיִן מֵה־
שְׂאֵלָתוֹ וַיִּנָּתֶן לָּהּ וּמֵה־בִּקְשָׁתָהּ עַד־חֲצִי
הַמַּלְכוּת וְתַעֲשׂ: *וַתַּעַן אֶסְתֵּר וַתֹּאמֶר
שְׂאֵלָתִי וּבִקְשָׁתִי: אִם־מְצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֵי
הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאִם־עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב לָתֵת אֶת־
שְׂאֵלָתִי וְלַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־בִּקְשָׁתִי יָבוֹא
הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהָמֶן אֶל־הַמִּשְׁתָּה אֲשֶׁר אֶעֱשֶׂה
לָהֶם וּמִתֵּר אֶעֱשֶׂה כְּדָבָר הַמֶּלֶךְ: וַיֵּצֵא
הָמֶן בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא שְׂמֵחַ וְטוֹב לֵב וּכְרָאוֹת
הָמֶן אֶת־מֶרְדֳּכָי בַּשָּׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ וּלְאֶקָם
וּלְאִזֵּעַ מִמֶּנּוּ וַיִּמָּלֵא הָמֶן עַל־מֶרְדֳּכָי

יחצי הספר בפסוקים ז

ח

ט

והמן — *so the King and Haman came*. [i.e. they came immediately. This phrase does not begin a new verse, to indicate how quickly they arrived].

6. [Ahasuerus realized that Esther would not have risked her life merely to come and invite him to a banquet. Therefore, he repeated his inquiry into the real nature of Esther's petition.]

Request ... petition שְׂאֵלָתָהּ...בִּקְשָׁתָהּ שְׂאֵלָה ['request'] implies a personal request; בִּקְשָׁה ['petition'] implies that which one petitions on behalf of others. Therefore, the verse says: 'What is your [personal] request? וַיִּנָּתֶן לָּהּ — 'It shall be granted you. And what is your petition [on behalf of another]? ... וְתַעֲשׂ — It shall be fulfilled (Vilna Gaon).

[According to the *Masorah*, with the end of verse 6, half of the verses

in the Megillah have been completed.]

7. שְׂאֵלָתִי וּבִקְשָׁתִי — *Mt petition and my request* — 'My request and petition are not for half the kingdom; nor are they for money; nor was rebuilding the Temple my aim ...' (*Targum*).

8. —אֲשֶׁר אֶעֱשֶׂה לָהֶם — *That I shall prepare for them*. 'Them' i.e. Ahasuerus and Haman equally. Esther's aim was to arouse jealousy of Haman on the part of the King (*M'nos Halevi*).

— כְּדָבָר הַמֶּלֶךְ — *The King's bidding*. 'Tomorrow I will ask the great favor of the King' (*Alshich*).

According to *Rashi*, Esther promised, 'Tomorrow I will do what the King has asked me many times: I will reveal my people and my ancestry.'

and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

The first
banquet

⁶ The King said to Esther during the wine feast: 'What is your request? It shall be granted you. And what is your petition? Even if it be half the kingdom, it shall be fulfilled.' ⁷ So Esther answered and said: 'My request and my petition: ⁸ If I have won the King's favor, and if it pleases the King to grant my petition and to perform my request — let the King and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do the King's bidding.'

Haman
resolves to
hang
Mordechai

⁹ That day Haman went out joyful and exuberant. But when Haman noticed Mordechai in the King's gate and that he neither stood up nor stirred before him, Haman was infuriated with Mordechai.

9. שמח וטוב לב — Joyful and exuberant. 'Joyful' — at the special honor he received; and 'exuberant' — at having dined so well (M'nos Halevi).

Esther's ruse worked. When Haman arrived at Esther's banquet, he was apprehensive of Esther's reason for inviting him. He suspected a connection between the new edict concerning the Jews and his invitation. Only now, having left the first party at which he was overwhelmed with flattery, was he joyous and confident. He was unprepared, therefore, for the consequences of Esther's next banquet (M'nos Halevi).

'When they had eaten and drunk, Haman said to himself: "The King promotes me and his wife honors me, and there is none greater than I in all the kingdom." And he rejoiced in his heart exceedingly.' (Midrash)

על־מֶרְדֵּכַי חָמָה — Infuriated with Mordechai. Until now, Haman rationalized that Mordechai's well known friendship with the Queen allowed him to refuse bowing down and prostrating before him. It was now obvious that Esther didn't care for Mordechai — after all, she invited only Haman, not Mordechai, to her banquet. Haman became more infuriated than ever at Mordechai's refusal to bow down to him. In fact, Mordechai didn't even 'stir' in Haman's presence! This was the first time since the decree was published that Haman saw Mordechai (Yosef Lekach).

Until this point, Haman considered it beneath his dignity [יָבִין בְּעֵינָיו (3:6)] to punish Mordechai alone. Now that the decree was promulgated — everyone knowing that it was the result of Mordechai's refusal to bow — Mordechai remained obstinate, and refused

פֶּרֶק ה' י חֲמָה: וַיִּתְאַפֵּק הָמָן וַיָּבֹא אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ
 וַיִּשְׁלַח וַיָּבֵא אֶת־אֶהֱבִיו וְאֶת־זֶרֶשׁ יִיד
 אִשְׁתּוֹ: וַיְסַפֵּר לָהֶם הָמָן אֶת־כְּבוֹד עֲשָׂרוֹ יא
 וְרֹב בָּנָיו וְאֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר גָּדְלוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֵת
 אֲשֶׁר נִשְׂאוֹ עַל־הַשָּׂרִים וְעַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ:
 וַיֹּאמֶר הָמָן אֵף לֹא־הִבִּיאתִי אֶסְתֵּר יב
 הַמֶּלֶכָה עִם־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל־הַמִּשְׁתָּה אֲשֶׁר־
 עָשָׂתָה בִּי אִם־אוֹתִי וְגַם לְמַחֵר אָנִי
 קָרוֹא־לָהּ עִם־הַמֶּלֶךְ: וְכִלְזָהּ אֵינְנִי שׁוֹה יג
 לִי בְכָל־עֵת אֲשֶׁר אָנִי רֹאֶה אֶת־מֶרְדֵּכָי
 הַיְּהוּדִי יוֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ: וַתֹּאמֶר לוֹ יד

even to 'stir' — וְלֹא־נָע מִמֶּנּוּ. This could not be attributed to his Jewishness; his religion might forbid him to bow, but surely he could have no legitimate reason to ignore Haman entirely. At the very least, he should have showed some fear in view of the impending extermination of the Jews. His obstinance could only be an indication of the man's arrogance. Then Haman grew infuriated with Mordechai — and wanted to kill him even before the date of the decree (*R. Galico, Alshich, Malbim*). [See bracketed comment on 2:2.]

10. וַיִּתְאַפֵּק הָמָן — *Haman restrained himself.*

He was afraid to take revenge without permission (*Rashi*).

וְאֶת־זֶרֶשׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ — *And Zeresh his wife.* She was extremely cruel, and the only one of his friends and counselors capable of advising him. She advised that since Mordechai was of Jewish stock Haman would not be able to overcome him unless he contrived a punishment no Jew

had ever experienced. Hananiah and his companions were delivered from fire, Daniel from a lion's den, Joseph from a dungeon. Mordechai's ancestors, banished into the wilderness, were fruitful and multiplied there and withstood many trials; and Samson killed the Philistines even after his eyes were gouged out. 'Therefore,' advised Zeresh, 'hang Mordechai on a gallows for we have not found that any of his people were ever delivered from that.' This suggestion pleased Haman (*Midrash*).

11. אֶת־כְּבוֹד עֲשָׂרוֹ... — *His wealth* etc. By recounting his wealth and good fortune he hoped to get out of his despondent mood (*Yosef Lekach; Vilna Gaon*).

Three things make a man happy: wealth, children, and greatness (*Alshich*).

Haman wished to prove that he had all three and, as a result, could easily dispose of his arch-enemy, Mordechai: 1— כְּבוֹד עֲשָׂרוֹ, 'the glory of his riches' — he had suf-

¹⁰ Nevertheless Haman restrained himself and went home. He sent for his friends and his wife, Zeresh, ¹¹ and Haman recounted to them the glory of his wealth and his large number of sons, and every instance where the King had promoted him and advanced him above the officials and royal servants. ¹² Haman said: 'Moreover, Queen Esther invited no one but myself to accompany the King to the banquet that she had prepared, and tomorrow, too, I am invited by her along with the King. ¹³ Yet all this means nothing to me so long as I see that Jew Mordechai sitting at the King's gate.' ¹⁴ Then his wife, Zeresh, and

ficient financial means to bring about Mordechai's downfall; 2—רַב בָּנָיו, 'his large number of sons' all very capable; 3 — אֲשֶׁר נִשְׂאוֹ — 'and advanced him above the officials' — endowing him with the power to kill anyone he wishes. 'Lastly,' Haman said, 'even the Queen herself would not save Mordechai. It was I, alone, not Mordechai, whom she invited to the banquet.' Eventually, Haman was proved wrong in all these cases: *His wealth* was given to Mordechai; *his sons* were hung; *the King who had honored him* humbled him before Mordechai; and *Esther* exposed him as her enemy and intent on her people's death.

12. בִּי אִם־אוֹתִי — No one but myself. Foremost among Haman's causes for vanity was his conviction that Esther held Mordechai in contempt (*Alshich*).

In his arrogance, Haman was convinced that Esther held him in such high esteem that she arranged a special, intimate banquet solely

for the purpose of having him present when she made a major personal request of the King. She was relying on Haman's influence to sway the King in her favor (*Malbim*).

13. Now Haman came to the main point of his discussion: He had not recounted the glories of his wealth, children, and power simply to make conversation. Obviously, his wife and friends were well aware of his family and status. Rather, he told them all this just to lead up to the point of how debilitatingly frustrated he was at Mordechai's refusal to acknowledge his superiority (*Yosef Lekach*).

יֹשֵׁב בַּשַּׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ — Sitting at the King's gate. Notice that Haman did not mention to his wife and children that he was angry because of Mordechai's refusal to bow down to him; he thought it beneath his dignity to admit that such a minor slight could ruffle him so. Rather he claimed that he was angry because

וְרָשׁ אֶשְׁתּוֹ וְכָל אֲהָבָיו יַעֲשׂוּ-עֵץ גָּבִהַ
חֲמִשִּׁים אַמָּה וּבִבְקָרְאִי אָמַר לַמֶּלֶךְ וַיִּתְּלוּ
אֶת-מֶרְדֵּכַי עָלָיו וּבָא עַם-הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל-
הַמִּשְׁתָּה שָׂמַח וַיִּיטֹב הַדְּבָר לִפְנֵי הַמֶּן
וַיַּעַשׂ הָעֵץ:

פֶּרֶק ו א בְּלִילָה הַהוּא נִדְּדָה שְׁנַת הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיֹּאמֶר
לְהָבִיא אֶת-סֵפֶר הַזְכְּרֹנוֹת דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים א

'the Jew Mordechai was sitting at the King's gate' and he was totally unworthy of such a high honor (Me'am Loez).

14. יַעֲשׂוּ-עֵץ — *Let a gallows be made.* Since no Jew had ever before been miraculously saved from hanging, this is the one punishment that, in the opinion of his advisors, Haman could hope to inflict on Mordechai (*Midrash; see Commentary on verse 10*).

גָּבִהַ חֲמִשִּׁים אַמָּה — *Fifty cubits high.* The gallows were built that high to enable Haman to see it and rejoice at its sight while feasting with the King (*Ma'amar Mordechai*).

Haman searched for a 50-foot beam but could not find one. So his

son, Parshandasa, who was the governor of the Mt. Ararat area, supplied him with a beam from the remains of Noah's Ark, which was 50-feet long' (*Midrash Abba Gorion*).

— וּבָא עַם-הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל-הַמִּשְׁתָּה שָׂמַח — *Then in good spirits accompany the King to the banquet. 'In good spirits' — at the death of Mordechai (Alshich).*

וַיַּעַשׂ הָעֵץ—*And he had the gallows erected.* Haman didn't undress or go to sleep. He immediately called artisans to build the gallows. His sons banged with hammers and rejoiced; Zeresh his wife played musical instruments with Haman and boasted that she would pay for the construction, and she arranged a feast (*Targum*).

VI

1. נִדְּדָה שְׁנַת הַמֶּלֶךְ — *Sleep eluded the King.* [literally: *'the sleep of the King was shaken'*].

Allegorically understanding the word 'King' as G-d, 'The King of the Universe,' the *Midrash* com-

all his friends said to him: 'Let a gallows be made, fifty cubits high; and tomorrow morning speak to the King and have them hang Mordechai on it. Then, in good spirits, accompany the King to the banquet.' This suggestion pleased Haman; and he had the gallows erected.

VI ¹ That night sleep eluded the King so he ordered 1 that the record book, the annals, be brought and

ments that the cries of the Jews caused 'the heavens, the throne of the Supreme King of Kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, to be shaken when He saw Israel in such distress.' Taken this way, the verse is saying that G-d's sleep was disturbed. Obviously — even allegorically — 'sleep' cannot be attributed to G-d Almighty. There are times when G-d, in His wisdom, chooses to ignore human needs, almost as if He 'were asleep,' a sleep that can be shaken by the repentance of Israel (*Torah T'mimah*).

'King Ahasuerus' sleep was also disturbed by a dream in which he saw Haman seizing a sword to kill him. He awoke in terror and told his secretaries to bring the book of chronicles to see what events had occurred (*Midrash*).

In the Talmud, 'Rava said: It means literally "the sleep of King Ahasuerus." A thought occurred to Ahasuerus: What is the meaning of Esther having invited Haman to the feast? Perhaps they are conspiring to kill me? He thought again: If that

is so, don't I have any friends who would tell me? Then he thought again: Perhaps someone has done me a valuable service and gone unrewarded. If I am guilty of such ingratitude then I may have forfeited the friendship of loyal subjects; they will not inform me of conspiracies against me. He, therefore, ordered the record book, the annals to be brought' (*Megillah 15b*).

To account for his sleeplessness, Ahasuerus thought he might have been poisoned and he was about to order the execution of those charged with the preparation of his food. But they succeeded in convincing him of their innocence by calling to his attention that Esther and Haman shared his evening meal with him without feeling unpleasant after effects (*Midrash Lekach Tov*).

Some commentators say that this was the very first time Ahasuerus experienced insomnia, hence, his great concern (*Me'am Loez*).

ספר הזכרונות דברי הימים — *The record book, the annals*. [This is the

פֶּרֶק ו ב וִיֵּהִיו נִקְרָאִים לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ: וַיִּמְצָא כְּתוּב
 אֲשֶׁר הִגִּיד מְרֹדֶכַי עַל־בְּגִתָּנָא וְתִרְשׁ שְׁנֵי
 סָרִיסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁמַרְי הַסֵּף אֲשֶׁר בִּקְשׁוּ
 לְשַׁלַּח יָד בַּמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֹׁרוּשׁ: וַיֹּאמֶר
 הַמֶּלֶךְ מִה־נַּעֲשֶׂה יָקָר וּגְדוּלָּה לְמְרֹדֶכַי
 עַל־זֶה וַיֹּאמְרוּ נַעֲרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁרָתָיו לֹא־
 נַעֲשֶׂה עִמּוֹ דָּבָר: וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ מִי בְּחֶצֶר

only place in תנ"ך, the Bible, that the phrase סֵפֶר זְכוֹרֹת — lit. 'the Book of Remembrance,' is used in conjunction with דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים, the annals.]

It is common for kings to have parables and official speeches read to them to help lull them to sleep (Rashi).

The king asked that the record book be read to him because he felt that his sleeplessness might be punishment for an unfulfilled oath (Ibn Ezra).

2. וַיִּמְצָא כְּתוּב — *There it was found recorded.* [See our commentary to 2:23: וַיִּכְתֹּב — 'it was recorded.']

אֲשֶׁר הִגִּיד מְרֹדֶכַי — *That Mordechai had denounced.* In this record book it was mentioned that Mordechai denounced Bigsana and Teresh to the King *directly*, without the intercession of Esther (Alshich).

עַל־בְּגִתָּנָא וְתִרְשׁ — *Bigsana and Teresh* — Previously [in 2:21] he is referred to as 'Bigsan'; why the addition of an *aleph* — א, at the end of his name? Haman's sons were the scribes who recorded the incident; they wished to make light of Mordechai's involvement so they wrote that Mordechai had denounced *אוֹ תִרְשׁ* — 'Bigsan or

Teresh' — not even knowing which was the guilty party. Thus, they implied an innocent man was executed as a result of Mordechai's vague suspicions — therefore Mordechai was unworthy of any reward. When the incident was read now, the incriminating word "או — or" seemed separated. The *Aleph*, א moved to the end of 'Bigsan,' and the *Vav*, ו, [the prefix 'and'] to Teresh. Now the chronicle read, "בְּגִתָּנָא וְתִרְשׁ" — "*Bigsana and Teresh*" i.e. Mordechai saved the King's life by denouncing both equally guilty plotters. He was eminently deserving of reward — which he never received (Alshich, M'nos Halevi).

According to the Malbim, the King had forgotten who was responsible for saving his life in the Bigsan-Teresh incident. All he remembered was that Esther had told him and, since Haman was responsible for his choosing a new Queen, the King promoted him and bestowed enormous power upon him. The Malbim differentiates between the דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים — *the book of records*, the official chronicle of the nation's history, which was kept under the jurisdiction of the prime minister, and the סֵפֶר הַזְכוֹרֹת — *the annals*, [literally: book of remembrances] the King's personal diary

פ ר ק ו ב וַיְהִינּוּ נִקְרָאִים לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ: וַיִּמָּצָא כְּתוּב
ב־ד אֲשֶׁר הִגִּיד מֶרְדֳּכַי עַל-בְּגִתָּנָא וְתֶרֶשׁ שְׁנֵי
 סְרִיסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁמֵרֵי הַסֵּף אֲשֶׁר בִּקְשׁוּ
ג לְשַׁלַּח יָד בַּמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשׁוּרוֹשׁ: וַיֹּאמֶר
 הַמֶּלֶךְ מַה-נַּעֲשֶׂה יָקָר וּגְדוֹלָה לְמֶרְדֳּכַי
 עַל-זֶה וַיֹּאמְרוּ נַעֲרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁרָתָיו לֹא-
ד נַעֲשֶׂה עִמּוֹ דָּבָר: וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ מִי בַּחֲצָר

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VI be read before the King. ² There it was found
 2-4 recorded that Mordechai had denounced Bigsana and
 Mordechai is Teresh, two of the King's chamberlains of the guar-
 finally dians of the threshold, who had plotted to lay hands
 rewarded on King Ahasuerus. ³ 'What honor or dignity has
 been conferred on Mordechai for this?' asked the
 King. 'Nothing has been done for him,' replied the
 King's pages. ⁴ The King said: 'Who is in the court?'

which was kept in the monarch's personal possession. Haman had rewritten the book of records and inserted his own name to conform with his self-serving version. Now, however, when the King had his personal diary read to him, he discovered that Mordechai, not Haman, was responsible for saving his life. Thus becoming aware of Haman's fraud in the Bigsan-Teresh affair, Ahasuerus was quite willing to accept the even more damning accusation that Esther would make against Haman the next day. This teaches a great lesson about Divine intervention — precisely at the crucial moment when Haman built a gallows to hang Mordechai — G-d reversed the course of events.

3. מה נעשה... למרדכי — *What ... has been conferred on Mordechai?* Knowing that his kingdom's greatest honor had been bestowed upon Haman, and that as Esther's foster parent, Mordechai had been elevated to a position at the King's gate, — the King wanted to know if Mordechai had been given any form of special recognition for this particular good deed (Yosef Lekach; Alshich; M'nos Halevi).

ברך — לא נעשה עמו דבר — *Nothing has been done for him.*

The Talmud comments: they answered him, not because they loved Mordechai but because they hated Haman. (Megillah 16b)

The servants said that nothing was done עמו, 'with him.' — They meant to imply that rewards were indeed given, but not to him who was deserving of them. Instead of showering Mordechai with symbols of his gratitude, Ahasuerus rewarded the undeserving Haman (Me'am Loez).

Quoting the commentary Tehillah L'Dovid the Me'am Loez states that in the midst of this conversation the servants heard Haman approaching and they used the word עמו — with 'him' [not specifically mentioning Mordechai] so Haman wouldn't understand the implication that was so unfavorable to his fortunes.

4. מי בחצר — *who is in the court?* The Midrash Abba Gorion relates that upon hearing Mordechai's name, the King finally dozed off. He dreamt that Haman was hovering above him with sword in hand ready to kill him. The King awoke, terrified, and asked 'Who is in the court?' When he heard it was Haman, he exclaimed, "My dream is coming true!" [See commentary on verse 6].

וְהָמָן בָּא לַחֲצַר בֵּית־הַמֶּלֶךְ הַחִיצוֹנָה פֶּרֶק ו
 לֵאמֹר לַמֶּלֶךְ לְתִלּוֹת אֶת־מֶרְדֵּכַי עַל־ ה־ח
 הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר־הֵכִין לוֹ: וַיֹּאמְרוּ נַעֲרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ ה
 אֵלָיו הִנֵּה הָמָן עֹמֵד בַּחֲצַר וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ
 יָבוֹא: וַיְבוֹא הָמָן וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ מָה־ ו
 לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בִּיקְרוֹ
 וַיֹּאמֶר הָמָן בִּלְבּוֹ לִמִּי יַחֲפֹץ הַמֶּלֶךְ
 לַעֲשׂוֹת יָקָר יוֹתֵר מִמֶּנִּי: וַיֹּאמֶר הָמָן אֶל־ ו
 הַמֶּלֶךְ אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בִּיקְרוֹ:
 יָבִיאוּ לְבוֹשׁ מַלְכוּת אֲשֶׁר לְבִשְׁבוֹ ה
 הַמֶּלֶךְ וְסוֹס אֲשֶׁר רֹכֵב עָלָיו הַמֶּלֶךְ

According to the *Alshich* the intent of the King's question was: 'Who in my court bears the responsibility of reminding me to distribute rewards to deserving parties?'

וְהָמָן בָּא — *Haman had just come* — 'While it was still night' (*Alshich*).

[Haman was so anxious to rid himself of Mordechai that he didn't follow the sensible advice of Zeresh to wait until morning to approach the King. His entering the scene at so inopportune a time is the beginning of his downfall].

אֲשֶׁר־הֵכִין לוֹ — *which he had prepared for him*. [the word *לוֹ*, for *him*, is seemingly superfluous.] According to the Talmud: 'A Tanna stated: He had prepared it for himself' (*Meg. 16a*).

The Talmud tells us that Haman, without realizing it, was divinely influenced to prepare the gallows for ultimate use on himself. Elsewhere in the Megillah, the Heavenly decree that was originally against

the Jews was reversed and turned against their enemies. The preparation of the gallows was different. The Talmud tells us that from the moment of its preparation, its intended victim was Haman (*Vilna Gaon*).

Traditionally, every Mitzvah requires הִכָּנָה — previous preparation; unlike sins, which are committed spontaneously. Therefore, our Sages [*Meg. 16a*] commented that "Haman prepared the gallows for himself." If there was הִכָּנָה, preparation, it follows that a Mitzvah was being readied. The Mitzvah was the destruction of the memory of Amalek [of whom Haman was a descendant] (*Belzer Rebbe*).

6. One analysis of the situation is as follows: Ahasuerus dreamt that Haman, sword in hand, was hovering above him to slay him and he awoke, unable to return to sleep. He ordered his servants to read to him and they related how Mordechai

VI

5-8

(Now Haman had just come into the outer court of the palace to speak to the King about hanging Mordechai on the gallows he had prepared for him.)⁵ So the King's servants answered him: 'It is Haman standing in the court.' And the King said: 'Let him enter.'⁶ When Haman came in the King said unto him: 'What should be done for the man whom the King especially wants to honor? (Now Haman reasoned to himself: 'Whom would the King especially want to honor besides me?')⁷ So Haman said to the King: 'For the man whom the King especially wants to honor,⁸ have them bring a royal robe that the King has worn and a horse that the King has rid-

saved the King in the Bigsan-Teresh incident. Haman entered the scene just then, in the middle of the night when the King never received callers. Ahasuerus was convinced that Haman had come at an hour when most people are asleep for only one reason — to kill him. 'Haman, who appears to be my intimate friend wants to assassinate me,' thought Ahasuerus, 'and he even wants to be rid of Mordechai — my real friend — who saved my life.' The King was determined to establish the facts. He began his plan by ordering Haman to personally bestow royal honors upon his arch-enemy, Mordechai (*Even Shoham*).

הַפֶּז בִּיקְרוֹ — *especially wants to honor or dignity*. Why, in his Ahasuerus mentioned יָקָר וגדולה — honor and greatness. Why, in his question to Haman did he mention only יָקָר — honor? Had the King mentioned גְּדוּלָּה — greatness, Haman would have instantly infer-

red that the King couldn't mean him; what more greatness could Haman possibly get? The King had already גָּדַל, *promoted*, Haman (3:1) and set his seat above all the officers who were with him. But יָקָר — honor, knows no bounds. Ahasuerus knew full well that there is hardly a person alive — and surely not a vain man like Haman — who doesn't crave more honor than he already has. (*Vilna Gaon*).

וַיֹּאמֶר הָמָן בְּלִבּוֹ — *Haman reasoned to himself*. The writer of the Book of Esther was divinely inspired and knew what Haman was thinking by means of רוּחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ — the Holy Spirit (*Meg. 7a*).

7. אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הָמֶלֶךְ הַפֶּז בִּיקְרוֹ — *For the man whom the King especially wants to honor*. Haman said that there is no greater honor for any man than to know that the King wants to honor him publicly (*Malbim*).

פרק ר ט
ט-יא
 וַאֲשֶׁר נָתַן כֶּתֶר מַלְכוּת בְּרֹאשׁוֹ: וְנָתַן
 הַלְבוּשׁ וְהַסּוּס עַל-יַד-אִישׁ מִשְׁרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ
 הַפָּרָתִּים וְהַלְבָּשׁוּ אֶת-הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר
 הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בִּיקְרוֹ וְהִרְבִּיבֵהוּ עַל-הַסּוּס
 בְּרָחוּב הָעִיר וְקִרְאוּ לִפְנָיו בְּכָה יַעֲשֶׂה
 לְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בִּיקְרוֹ: וַיֹּאמֶר
 הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהֶמָּן מְהֵרָה קַח אֶת-הַלְבוּשׁ וְאֶת-
 הַסּוּס כָּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ וַעֲשֵׂה-כֵן לְמֶרְדֵּכָי
 הַיְּהוּדִי הַיּוֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל-תַּפֵּל
 דְּבַר מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ: וַיִּקַּח הֶמָּן אֶת-
 הַלְבוּשׁ וְאֶת-הַסּוּס וַיַּלְבֵּשׁ אֶת-מֶרְדֵּכָי
 וַיַּרְבִּיבֵהוּ בְּרָחוּב הָעִיר וַיִּקְרָא לִפְנָיו

8. *Royal crown*—כֶּתֶר מַלְכוּת בְּרֹאשׁוֹ. At the very mention of the word 'crown', Ahasuerus' face reddened; Haman did not refer to it again during the conversation (*Alshich; Rashi*).

His head. The commentators differ as to whose head is referred to: According to *Rashi* Haman suggested the crown be placed on the honoree's head; *Ibn Ezra* comments that in his opinion the *his* definitely refers to the horse because it is common knowledge that a crown is sometimes placed on the King's horse while the King is riding it, and that no one else may ever ride the crowned royal horse; *Alshich, Vilna Gaon* and *Malbim* understand Haman's suggestion to refer to the horse that the King himself rode on the day of his coronation.

9. *The most noble* [or: 'Royal descendants'; see commentary on 1:3].

Proclaiming before him. — וְקִרְאוּ לִפְנָיו. Haman shrewdly suggested this proclamation in order to make sure that his attempt at self-aggrandizement did not backfire by inciting the King's jealousy. The King might respond that if the suggestion is implemented, and someone is dressed royally and paraded on the King's horse, then people might think this man is second to the throne! Anticipating this response, Haman suggested that whoever leads this person should loudly proclaim that this honor was bestowed upon this man by beneficence of the King in gratitude for a good deed — and not because of the recipient's governmental status (*Rav Arama*)

10. *Hurry.* The King had a reason for rushing Haman so. Ahasuerus was going to meet Esther that day at the banquet. He wanted to make sure that in case Esther should ask him why Mordechai,

וַאֲשֶׁר נָתַן בְּתֹר מַלְכוּת בְּרֹאשׁוֹ: וְנָתַן
הַלְבוּשׁ וְהַסּוּס עַל-יַד-אִישׁ מִשְׁכֵּי הַמֶּלֶךְ
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הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהֶמָּן מְהֵרָה קַח אֶת-הַלְבוּשׁ וְאֶת-
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הַיְּהוּדִי הַיּוֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל-תַּפֵּל
דָּכָר מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ: וַיִּקַּח הֶמָּן אֶת-
הַלְבוּשׁ וְאֶת-הַסּוּס וַיַּלְבֵּשׁ אֶת-מֹרְדֵכָי
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VI

9-11

Haman's
humiliation

den, one with a royal crown on his head. ⁹ Then let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the King's most noble officers, and let them attire the man whom the King especially wants to honor, and parade him on horseback through the city square proclaiming before him: 'This is what is done for the man whom the King especially wants to honor.' ¹⁰ Then the King said to Haman: 'Hurry, then, get the robe and the horse as you have said and do all this for Mordechai the Jew, who sits at the King's gate. Do not omit a single detail that you have suggested!' ¹¹ So Haman took the robe and the horse and attired Mordechai, and led him through the city square proclaiming before him: 'This is what is done for the

who had saved the King's life, was never rewarded, he would be able to tell her that the oversight had already been remedied (Yosef Lekach).

Ahasuerus rushed Haman so much because he wanted Haman to be finished in time for Esther's banquet. It is indicative from here that all of Ahasuerus' deeds — this one, the execution of Vashti, the selection of Esther, the edict — were done hastily and impetuously. Ahasuerus' behavior was typical of the fool he was (Me'am Loez).

לְמַרְדֵּכִי הַיְּהוּדִי — For Mordechai the Jew. 'Haman' said to him: Who is Mordechai? He answered: הַיְּהוּדִי — The Jew. He said: There are many Mordechais among the Jews. He answered: הַיּוֹשֵׁב בַּשַּׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ — Who sits at the King's gate (Meg. 16a).

בְּאִשְׁרֵי דְבָרָתָא — As you have said. Human nature is such that when a

person is compelled to do something against his will, he tends to omit details. Ahasuerus, therefore, enumerated every detail of the reward and let Haman know clearly that he insisted on full compliance (Me'am Loez).

Ahasuerus wanted to publicly demonstrate that the reward given to someone who reveals a conspiracy to the King is greater even than Haman's. Thus, anyone with similar information about a conspiracy between Haman or Esther — a haunting suspicion that preyed on the King's mind — would be encouraged to come forward and reveal it to the King (Alshich).

11. וַיְרִיבֵהוּ בִּרְחוֹב הָעִיר — And led him through the city square. 'As he was leading Mordechai through the streets, Haman's daughter saw them from an overhanging roof. She thought the man on the horse was her father and the man leading

פָּרָק וּ בְּכָה יַעֲשֶׂה לְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הִמְלִךְ חָפֶץ
 יב־ יְבִיד בִּיקְרוּ: וַיָּשָׁב מֶרְדֵּכָי אֶל־שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ
 וְהָמָן נִדְחָף אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ אָבֵל וְחָפוּי רֹאשׁ:
 ג־ וַיִּסְפֹּר הָמָן לְזֶרֶשׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ וּלְכָל־אֲהָבָיו
 אֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר קָרָהוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ חֲכָמָיו
 וּזְרָשׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ אִם מִזֶּרַע הִיְהוּדִים מֶרְדֵּכָי
 אֲשֶׁר הִחְלוֹת לִנְפֹל לִפְנָיו לְאִתּוֹכָל לוֹ
 ד־ כִּי־נָפֹל תִּפּוֹל לִפְנָיו: עוֹדֶם מְדַבְּרִים

him was Mordechai. So she took a chamber pot and emptied it on the head of her father. He looked up at her, and when she realized it was her father, she threw herself from the roof to the ground and killed herself (Meg. 16a).

12. וַיָּשָׁב מֶרְדֵּכָי אֶל־שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ — And Mordechai returned to the King's gate. 'This teaches us that he returned to his sackcloth and fasting [because he went, only to the gate but did not enter]. (Midrash)

He returned to the Sanhedrin which convened at the King's gate (Targum).

Mordechai returned to the gate and gathered the children of Israel in prayer. He told them that he had hoped to beg the King to annul the decree in reward for his having saved the King's life; now that the King had already rewarded him, that opportunity was lost forever. 'Now we can rely only on G-d to save us from Haman' (Me'am Loez).

But Haman — וְהָמָן ... אָבֵל וְחָפוּי רֹאשׁ ... despondent and with his head covered. [אָבֵל] — despondent, literally 'mourning.']

He was 'mourning' for his daughter [see commentary on verse 11], and with his head covered [i.e. humiliated] on account of what had happened to him (Meg. 16a).

13. —[And] Haman told. In 5:10, the verse tells us; וַיִּשְׁלַח וַיָּבֵא, 'he sent for' his wife and friends and brought them to his house. They had remained in his house to learn the outcome of their advice and to see if he was successful in persuading the King to hang Mordechai (Ibn Ezra).

אֲשֶׁר קָרָהוּ — Everything that had happened. Haman was still not dissuaded from seeking revenge against Mordechai. The word קָרָהוּ — 'happened' implies a coincidental happening. This is how Haman viewed the situation: 'It was just a matter of bad luck in my going to the King to hang Mordechai on the day the King decided to repay Mordechai some old debt of gratitude. Now that the debt has been paid, I am sure the King will listen to my advice and hang Mordechai.' His wife and advisors, however, did not share Haman's confidence and they so advised him (Yosef Lekach, Malbim).

VI man whom the King especially wants to honor.'

12-13 ¹² Mordechai returned to the King's gate; But Haman hurried home, despondent and with his head covered. ¹³ Haman told his wife, Zeresh, and all his friends everything that had happened to him, and his advisors and his wife, Zeresh, said to him: 'If Mordechai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish descent, you will not prevail against him, but will undoubtedly fall before him.'

Haman's
doom is
forecast

וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ חֲכָמָיו — His advisors said to him. [חֲכָמָיו literally 'his wise men'].

'First they are called 'his friends' and then they are called 'his wise men.' Rav Yochanan said 'Whoever says a wise thing ... is called 'wise.' (Meg. 16a).

When Haman began to tell them his troubles they are called חֲכָמָיו, 'his friends', now, when they reply they are called 'his wise men'. Their friendship was dependent upon his power. Now that they foresaw his downfall their love for him waned (Sfas Emes).

חֲכָמָיו, His wise men; i.e. those of אֲהֲבָיו, his friends, who were wise (Rav Galico).

Last time [5:10] Zeresh had answered first, now the חֲכָמָיו, advisors answered first. Haman now blamed her for what seemed to be her ineffectual advice — after all it was she who advised him to go to the King early in the morning — so he now asked her to remain silent and let the advisors speak first (D'na Pashra).

אִם מִזֶּרַע הַיְּהוּדִים — If he is of Jewish descent. הַיְּהוּדִים, lit. THE Jewish i.e. with the הַיְּהוּדִים — the

definitive article הַ [If Mordechai is a descendant of the saintly Jews ...] (Targum).

לֹא תִבָּל לּוֹ — You will not prevail against him.

Seemingly, all they were doing was adding salt to his open wounds. What kind of advice was that? They knew that the Jews are compared both to the dust of the earth and the stars in heaven. When they begin to fall, they fall all the way down to the dust; but when they begin to rise they can reach the stars. (Meg. 16a) Having seen that Mordechai the Jew was beginning to rise — and with him the Jews — they knew that the King's command that Haman lead Mordechai was not coincidental; it meant the beginning of the Jews' rise — and of Haman's downfall. Therefore, Haman's only hope was בִּיָּנְפוּל תִּפּוּל לִפְנֵי — to prostrate himself before Mordechai — beg his forgiveness, and dismantle the gallows (Yosef Lekach; Rashi; Vilna Gaon).

14. עוֹנֵם מִדְּבָרִים עִמּוֹ — While they were still talking with him. i.e. while he was considering their advice that he dismantle the gallows.

עֲמוּ וְסָרִיסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ הִגִּיעוּ וַיְבִיחוּ לוֹ לְהִבָּיֵא
אֶת־הַמֶּן אֶל־הַמִּשְׁתֶּה אֲשֶׁר־עָשְׂתָה
אֶסְתֵּר:

פֶּרֶק ז א וַיָּבֵא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּן לִשְׁתוֹת עִם־אֶסְתֵּר
אֶד ב הַמַּלְכָּה: וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאֶסְתֵּר גַּם בַּיּוֹם
הַשֵּׁנִי בַּמִּשְׁתֶּה הַזֶּה מִה־שְּׂאֲלָתְךָ אֶסְתֵּר
הַמַּלְכָּה וְתִתְּנֵנִי לָּהּ וּמִה־בִּקְשָׁתְךָ עַד־חֲצִי
ג הַמַּלְכוּת וְתַעֲשֵׂ: וְתַעַן אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה
וְתֹאמַר אֶם־מְצָאֵתִי חַן בְּעֵינֶיךָ הַמֶּלֶךְ
וְאִם־עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב תִּתְּנֵנִי לִי נִפְשִׁי
ד בְּשִׂאֲלָתִי וְעַמִּי בִּבְקִשְׁתִּי: כִּי נִמְכַּרְנוּ אֲנִי

G-d's plan caused the chamberlains to take him away to the party before he could implement their sugges-

tion. This was because of the divine intention that the gallows was destined for Haman (Vilna Gaon).

VII

1. לִשְׁתוֹת עִם־אֶסְתֵּר — *to feast with Esther*. [lit: to drink with Esther] This phrase is not mentioned at the first banquet (5:5) Her three days of fasting were now completed and, unlike the previous feast where Esther did not join them in partaking of the food, now she, too, ate (Alshich; Yosef Lekach).

Haman was embittered at his misfortune; the King, too, was disturbed at the unfolding turn of events and by his frightening dreams. They immersed themselves in drink to forget their bitterness (D'na Pashra).

It was one of G-d's miracles that, as disturbed as Ahasuerus was, He caused him to come to the feast, be cheered by the wine, and regain his good cheer to the extent that he was prepared to fulfill Esther's every wish (Rav Galico).

2. גַּם בַּיּוֹם הַשֵּׁנִי — Again the second day. The word גַּם, 'again' indicates that the King was as well-disposed on the second day as he was on the first. (Rav Galico)

— מִה־שְּׂאֲלָתְךָ אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה וְתִתְּנֵנִי לָּהּ — *What is your request, Queen Esther, it shall be granted you.* This

¹⁴ While they were still talking with him, the King's chamberlains arrived, and they hurried to bring Haman to the banquet which Esther had arranged.

VII ¹ So the King and Haman came to feast with Queen
1-4 Esther. ² The King asked Esther again on the second day at the wine feast: 'What is your request, Queen Esther?—it shall be granted you. And what is your petition?— Even if it be up to half the kingdom, it shall be fulfilled' ³ So Queen Esther answered and said: 'If I have won Your Majesty's favor and if it pleases the King, let my life be granted to me as my request and my people's as my petition. ⁴ For we have

The second
 banquet:
 Esther
 presents her
 request

time he referred to her as המלכה, the Queen, i.e. "As my Queen who reigns over the Kingdom with me, you may request anything and it will be granted you" (Yosef Lekach; Rav Galico; Malbim). [See also commentary on 5:6 for the difference between שאלה, 'request' and בקשה, 'petition'.]

3. בעיניך המלך.... המלך טוב, 'If I have won Your Majesty's [lit. 'the King's] favor and if it pleases the King. The first המלך King is taken to refer to G-d, the second to Ahasuerus. 'Esther cast her eyes heavenward and said: "If I have found favor in Your sight, O Supreme King, and if it pleases thee, O King Ahasuerus, let my life be given me, and let my people be rescued out of the hands of the enemy"' (Targum).

תתן לי נפשי בשאלתי—Let my life be granted to me as my request. i.e. That I be not killed on the 13th day of Adar, the date on which your decree orders the annihilation for my people. (Rashi)

ועמי בבקשתי — And my people's as my petition. i.e. Let my petition be granted that the life of my people be spared because אוכל איבדה אובל. 'How can I bear witness to the disaster which will befall my people [8:6] (Rashi).

G-d forbid that the sequence of Esther's request indicated that she placed her personal safety before her people's!

Rather, she showed great tact in arousing the King by first making a plea for her own life. The word בקשה 'petition' is stronger than שאלה 'request.' She requested her

פֶּרֶק ז'
 ה"ז
 וְעַמִּי לְהַשְׁמִיד לְהָרוֹג וּלְאַבֵּד וְאֵלֹו
 לַעֲבָדִים וּלְשִׁפְחוֹת נִמְכָּרְנוּ הַחֲרָשְׁתִּי כִּי
 ה' אֵין הָצָר שׁוּה בְּנֹזֶק הַמֶּלֶךְ: וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ
 אַחֲשֻׁרוֹשׁ וַיֹּאמֶר לְאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה מִי
 הוּא זֶה וְאִי־זֶה הוּא אֲשֶׁר־מָלְאוּ לְבֹו
 לַעֲשׂוֹת כֵּן: וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר אִישׁ צָר
 וְאוֹיֵב הָמֵן הָרַע הַזֶּה וְהָמֵן נִבְעַת מִלִּפְנֵי
 הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמַּלְכָּה: וְהַמֶּלֶךְ קָם בַּחֲמָתוֹ

own life in terms of a שאלה – request. When the King immediately responded that he would go to any ends to save her life, she said that her life was secondary to her. She had something far more important to ask – בְּקָשָׁה – *petition* – the salvation of her people. If her people were to be destroyed, then her own life would matter little to her; she would die a slow death from utter despair (*Yosef Lekach*).

4. לַעֲבָדִים וּלְשִׁפְחוֹת – *as slaves and servant-girls.* Esther said to the King: Had my people been enslaved, I would not have objected, for the Jews were warned in the Torah that if they sin they will be sold to their enemies. Your punishment, Ahasuerus, would not have been great, for you would have been instrumental in fulfilling the prophecy. But now you have decreed the complete extermination of the Jews, something the Torah never prophesied. For such a deed, your punishment would have been enormous. The צָר – enemy who instigated the decree did not concern himself with הַמֶּלֶךְ – the damage to the King that would result in the form of Divine retribution. (*Yosef Lekach*)

The adversary is not worthy of the King's damage, i.e. he is not concerned with the King's damage. Had he been concerned with the King's welfare he would have advised him to sell the Jews and keep the money, or keep them – and their descendants – as perpetual slaves (*Rashi*).

Of course, Esther wasn't suggesting that her people *should* be sold as slaves! She merely wanted to stress the evil intent of the adversary in not having originally made this better suggestion to the King (*Yosef Lekach*).

The *Ibn Ezra* comments that the adversary was not concerned with the financial damage to the King resultant from the enormous loss of tax revenue.

5. מִי הוּא זֶה – *Who is it...?* The King was agitated and he mumbled these words quickly. (*Ibn Ezra*).

[Ahasuerus had obviously not forgotten his grant to Haman; why did he ask for identification of the adversary?]

[The commentators differ: Some say that when Haman originally asked the King to issue the decree of annihilation [3:8-9], he never indentified the Jewish people as the in-

been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, slain, and annihilated. Had we been sold as slaves and servant-girls, I would have kept quiet, for the adversary is not worthy of the King's damage.'

Haman is
accused

⁵ Thereupon, King Ahasuerus exclaimed and said to Queen Esther: 'Who is it? Where is the one who dared to do this?' ⁶ And Esther said: 'An adversary and an enemy! This wicked Haman!' Haman trembled in terror before the King and Queen. ⁷ The

tended victims, hence Ahasuerus' ignorance when Esther made the veiled reference to Haman. Other commentators say that at this point, Ahasuerus still did not realize that she was a Jewess and he did not know to what she referred. Others say that Ahasuerus had never given Haman permission לאבד — *to annihilate them*, merely לעשות בו כטוב בעיניך — *'to do with it as you see fit'*, i.e., to do what is good for the country, a course Haman obviously did not follow.]

6. איש צר ואויב המן הרע הזה — *'An adversary and an enemy! This wicked Haman.'* Esther accused Haman, not of being a perpetrator of a sinful act, but of being *intrinsically* evil. Rather than concerning himself with the welfare of the State, he was involving Ahasuerus in a monstrous crime merely to seek revenge for his own petty hatreds (Rav Galico).

והמן נבעת מלפני המלך והמלכה — *Haman trembled in terror before the King and Queen.* In the presence of both of them, together, he trembled. Had he been confronted by either of them privately, he could have

talked his way out of the bind. To the Queen he could have innocently pleaded that he did not know the Jews were her people, and had he known he would never have issued the decree. To the King he could have claimed that, although the Jews were Esther's people, they were nevertheless worthy of extinction. But since both the King and Queen were there he couldn't defend himself: How could he tell the King — in the Queen's presence — that her people were evil? And how could he say to the Queen — in the King's presence — that, had he known they were her people, he never would have condemned them? Having said they were thoroughly evil it would have been traitorous for him to allow their survival! Therefore, he trembled in terror, for in their joint presence he was unable to defend himself (Vilna Gaon).

7. והמלך קם בהמתו — *The King rose in a rage.* He went out to "cool off" from his anger, part of G-d's master plan, to give Haman the opportunity to incriminate himself even further in the King's absence (Rav Galico).

The King, in his drunkenness

ממשתה ה'ין אל-גנת הביתן והמן עמר
 לבקש על-נפשו מאסתר המלכה כי
 ראה כי-כלתה אליו הרעה מאת המלך:
 והמלך שב מגנת הביתן אל-בית|משתה
 ה'ין והמן נפל על-המטה אשר אסתר
 עליה ויאמר המלך ה'גם לכבוש את-
 המלכה עמי בבית הדבר יצא מפי
 המלך ופני המן חפו: ויאמר חרבוֹנָה
 אחר מן-הסריסים לפני המלך גם הנה-

acted most unwisely in leaving the Queen alone with Haman at such a time. This is why the verse says that he left בחמתו — in a rage; had he been more composed, he certainly would not have run out (*Yad Hamelech*).

שב — לבקש על-נפשו. When the King left, Haman seized the opportunity to beg for his life by telling Esther that he didn't know the Jews were her people. Before he had a chance to get very far, however, the King returned (*Vilna Gaon*).

8. [In the garden, the King remembered that the incident resulting in Vashti's execution happened in that very same place! And the very same Haman — who was now alone with Esther — was responsible for Vashti's death just as he had been scheming to murder Esther and her people! Ahasuerus grew even more angry and he rushed back to the room only to see Haman nfall falling over Esther on her couch ('constantly falling' — having been pushed by an angel into this compromising position in order to infuriate the King —

Midrash) and the King misinterprets Haman's intention, perhaps deliberately, to add to Haman's misery—(*M'nos Halevi*).]

נפל על-המטה—*Was prostrated* [lit. 'falling'] on the couch.

They used to recline on couches during the meal, as it is written earlier [1:6] מטות זהב וכסף, *couches of gold and silver* (*Rashi*).

Another interpretation: Haman, by putting himself in this compromising position tried to implicate Esther and have her killed along with him. This plan, too, ended in failure as Esther screamed for help (*Ma'amar Mordechai*).

הדבר יצא מפי המלך — *As soon as the King uttered this* — The moment Ahasuerus uttered so serious a charge against Haman, it was obvious to the servants present that Haman was doomed (*Rav Galico*).

ופני המן חפו — *They covered Haman's face*. The servants covered his face in deference to the King's displeasure so that Ahasuerus would not see the face of his enemy ever again (*Ibn Ezra*).

It was the common practice in

King rose in a rage from the wine feast and went into the palace garden while Haman remained to beg Queen Esther for his life; for he saw that the King's evil determination against him was final. ⁸ When the King returned from the palace garden to the banquet room, Haman was prostrated on the couch upon which Esther was; so the King exclaimed: 'Would he actually assault the Queen while I'm in the house?' As soon as the King uttered this, they covered Haman's face. ⁹ Then Charbonah, one of the chamberlains in attendance of the King, said:

Haman is
executed

Persia to cover the face of a prisoner who was condemned to death (*Alshich*).

The *Vilna Gaon* and some other commentators understand חָפְנוּ, 'covered', in the sense of 'despondent' as in חָפְנוּ רֹאשׁ [in 6:12].

9. וַיֹּאמֶר חֲבֹנָה — Then Charbonah . . . said. [The *Midrashim* all point out how Charbonah painted an evil picture of a Haman who did not have the welfare of the King in mind when he conceived his evil plans against a Mordechai whose only sin it was that he saved the King from death at the hands of Bigsan and Teresh, in whose plot Haman was undoubtedly a co-conspirator.]

Charbonah was one of the chamberlains who went to fetch Haman to the banquet [6:14]. While waiting in Haman's home, he overheard the plot to hang Mordechai, and saw the gallows (*Yosef Lekach*).

The Talmud says that Charbonah was among the conspirators to hang Mordechai (*Meg. 16a*). Now that he saw that the plot had failed and that

Haman was in disfavor, he became his enemy and, before Haman could open his mouth and implicate Charbonah, he advised the King to hang Haman (*Yad Hamelech*).

'Charbonah said: This is not the only crime committed by Haman, for he was an accomplice of the conspirators, Bigsan and Teresh. His enmity against Mordechai dates back to the time when he bared that assassination attempt. Haman erected the gallows to avenge himself against Mordechai for his loyalty to the King.' Charbonah's words illustrate the saying: 'Once the ox has been cast aground, slaughtering knives can readily be found.' Knowing that Haman had fallen from his high estate, Charbonah was intent upon winning the friendship of Mordechai' (*Panim Acherim*).

[Our Sages ordained that one should always say זְכוֹר לטוב — 'Charbonah of blessed memory', because it was Charbonah's swift advice that prevented Haman from possibly talking — or bribing — his way back into the King's good graces].

פֶּרֶק ז' הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה הָמָן לְמָרְדֳּכָי אֲשֶׁר
דִּבֶּר-טוֹב עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ עִמָּד בְּבֵית הָמָן
גָּבַהַּ חֲמִשִּׁים אַמָּה וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ תִּלְהוּ
עָלָיו: וַיִּתְּלוּ אֶת-הָמָן עַל-הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר-
הָכִין לְמָרְדֳּכָי וַחֲמַת-הַמֶּלֶךְ שָׁכְבָה:

פֶּרֶק ח' א בֵּינוּם הָהוּא נָתַן הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֻׁרוּשׁ
לְאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה אֶת-בֵּית הָמָן צָרָר
הַיְּהוּדִיִּים וּמָרְדֳּכָי בָּא לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי-
הִגִּידָה אֶסְתֵּר מָה הוּא-לָּהּ: וַיִּסֶּר הַמֶּלֶךְ
ב אֶת-טִבְעֹתוֹ אֲשֶׁר הָעֵבִיר מִהָמָן וַיִּתְּנָה

גם — *Furthermore*. Charbonah told the King — not only did Haman do the things Esther accused him of, he is גם, also, guilty of preparing a gallows to hang a friend of the King, one who saved the King's life (*Rashi*).

... the gallows ... *Furthermore* ... the gallows ... Charbonah said: Haman's additional affront to the King is the fact that Haman dared to build a gallows on which, he boasted, he would hang the man of whom it was proclaimed [6:11] *'this is the man whom the King especially wants to honor.'* (*Malbim*).

— *And the King said 'Hang him on it.'* [The King rendered this judgment independently, without consulting anyone. See Commentary on 1:19 s.v. יֵצֵא — *Let there go forth.*]

10. — *And the King's anger abated.*

The Talmud asks: Why does the letter כ [chaf] appear twice in שָׁכְבָה — 'abated'? [The Hebrew word שָׁכָה — with one כ, as it is usually spelled in the Bible, would have sufficed.] The reply is given: There were two angers — the anger of the King of the Universe [G-d, against Israel for bowing down to the image] — and the other of Ahasuerus against Haman [for having condemned the Jews]. Others say, Ahasuerus was doubly angry at Haman, first on account of Esther [(i.e., Haman's plot against Esther — (*Rashi*)] and, second, on account of Vashti [for the King still remembered that he had allowed himself to be persuaded to act impetuously in having her executed. His anger was not abated until now, when Haman, who instigated Vashti's death also, was finally hanged (*Maharsha*).

VII

10

'Furthermore, the fifty-cubit-high gallows which Haman made for Mordechai — who spoke good for the King — is standing in Haman's house.' And the King said: 'Hang him on it.' ¹⁰ So they hanged Haman on the gallows which he had prepared for Mordechai, and the King's anger abated.

VIII

1-2

Mordechai is
appointed
Prime
Minister

¹ That very day, King Ahasuerus gave the estate of Haman, the enemy of the Jews, to Queen Esther. Mordechai presented himself to the King (for Esther had revealed his relationship to her). ² The King slipped off his signet ring, which he had removed from Haman, and gave it to Mordechai; and

VIII

1. ביום ההוא — *That very day*, i.e., on which Haman was hanged (*Alshich*).

וְנָתַן...לְאֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה — *Gave...to Queen Esther*. The decree was still in effect — not to be revoked — and the King wanted to demonstrate that Esther and Mordechai were not included in that decree (*Alshich*). G-d made everything happen so quickly to prevent Ahasuerus from reconsidering and perhaps changing his mind. (*Ma'amar Mordechai*).

וּמִרְדֵּכָי בָּא — *And Mordechai presented himself*. i.e. of his own volition, without permission (*Rav Eleazer of Worms*).

With the death of Haman, the law he instituted (to prevent Esther free access to the King) that no one may

approach the King unsummoned [4:11] was annulled (*M'nos Halevi*).

לְפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ — *To the King*. Till now, his place was at the King's gate. This did not reflect an improvement of the status of the Jews in general, just of Mordechai (*Alshich*).

2. טָבַעְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר הָעֵבִיר מֵהֶן — *His signet ring which he had removed from Haman*. At one time the custom was that the King himself wore the signet ring. When he gave it מֵעַל יָדוֹ 'from his hand' [3:10] to Haman he thereby instituted the custom that the prime minister would wear the signet. Therefore, the verse here specifically states that 'he removed it from Haman' i.e. that the King did not remove it from his own hand but rather from his prime minister's hand — as the precedent

לְמֹרְדֵכַי וּתָשֶׁם אֶסְתֵּר אֶת־מֹרְדֵכַי עַל־
 בֵּית הַמֶּן: וַתּוֹסֶף אֶסְתֵּר וַתְּדַבֵּר לִפְנֵי
 הַמֶּלֶךְ וַתִּפֹּל לִפְנֵי רַגְלָיו וַתִּבְכֶּה וַתַּחֲחֹן־
 לוֹ לְהַעֲבִיר אֶת־רֹעַת הַמֶּן הָאֵלֶּי וְאֵת
 מַחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר חָשַׁב עַל־הַיְּהוּדִים:
 וַיּוֹשֶׁט הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאַסְתֵּר אֶת שַׁרְבֹּט הַזָּהָב
 וַתִּקֶּם אֶסְתֵּר וַתַּעֲמֵד לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ:
 וַתֹּאמֶר אִם־עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב וְאִם־מִצָּאִתִּי
 חַן לִפְנָיו וְכִשֶּׁר הַדָּבָר לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ
 וְטוֹבָה אֲנִי בְּעֵינָיו יִכְתֹּב לְהָשִׁיב אֶת־
 הַסְּפָרִים מִחֲשַׁבַּת הַמֶּן בֶּן־הַמֹּדָתָא
 הָאֵלֶּי אֲשֶׁר כָּתַב לְאַבְדֹּת אֶת־הַיְּהוּדִים
 אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל־מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ: כִּי אֵיכָכָה
 אוֹכַל וְרֹאִיתִי בְּרָעָה אֲשֶׁר־יִמָּצָא אֶת־
 עַמִּי וְאֵיכָכָה אוֹכַל וְרֹאִיתִי בְּאַבְרֹן

had already been so established
 (Yosef Lekach).

וַתִּתֵּן לְמֹרְדֵכַי — *And he gave it to Mordechai.* [As a sign of power to act in the King's name].

וַתָּשֶׂם אֶסְתֵּר אֶת מֹרְדֵכַי — *And Esther put Mordechai ... i.e., she appointed him superintendent and administrator over Haman's estate.* Having received this property as a gift from the King, she could not very well have belittled the King's gift by transferring it outright to Mordechai; rather, she appointed him administrator (*M'nos Halevi*).

3. וַתּוֹסֶף אֶסְתֵּר — *Esther ... again.* Even though Mordechai had been appointed Prime Minister, his influence with the King was as yet untested. Having been so effective

previously, Esther again took the initiative to attempt to influence the King, this time to find a way to override Haman's evil decree. She and Mordechai were all too painfully aware that, despite the King's fury at Haman, her specific request regarding her own safety and her people's survival had not yet been answered by the King for the edict decreeing Israel's extermination was still in full force. She was apprehensive that the King, having hung Haman and advanced Mordechai, would not be concerned with the fate of her people. She spoke out (*Rav Galico; Yosef Lekach; M'nos Halevi*).

4. — *The King extended the gold scepter* not as a sign of clemency, but as a

VIII Esther put Mordechai in charge of Haman's estate.

3-6 ³ Esther yet again spoke to the King, collapsed at his feet, and cried and begged him to avert the evil intention of Haman the Agagite, and his scheme which he had plotted against the Jews. ⁴ The King extended the gold scepter to Esther, and Esther arose and stood before the King. ⁵ She said: 'If it pleases the King, and if I have won his favor, and the proposal seems proper in the King's opinion, and I be pleasing to him, let a decree be written to countermand those dispatches devised by Haman the son of Hammedasa, the Agagite, which he wrote ordering the destruction of the Jews who are in all the King's provinces. ⁶ For how can I bear to witness the disaster which will befall my people! How can I bear to witness the destruction of my relatives!'

Esther begs
the King to
avert
Haman's
decree

sign of encouragement that Esther might rise and speak without tears (*Rav Galico; Yosef Lekach; M'nos Halevi*).

5. אִם-עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב — *If it pleases the King...* There are three prerequisites that assure the success of a request: it must please the respondent; the petitioner must be liked by the respondent; the proposal, itself, must be a proper one. Therefore Esther prefaced her request with these three criteria (*Vilna Gaon*).

וְכָתַב — *Let a decree be written*, because a verbal decree is not sufficiently permanent and long-lasting (*Maamar Mordechai*).

לְהָשִׁיב אֶת-הַסְּפָרִים — *To countermand* [lit. 'to return'; 'to recall'] those dispatches. Haman's decree did not end with his death. Esther proposed the recall of the sealed

letters as the best possible course. By ordering the return of the original letters instead of sending a second letter contradicting the first one, Ahasuerus would avoid the embarrassment of having two conflicting letters in the hands of the officers at the same time (*Malbim*).

[Most commentators, however, understand the word לְהָשִׁיב in the sense of 'nullify'. It was well established Persian law that a royal decree could not be revoked. Esther, however, represented the decree as being מְחֻשְׁבֵּת הַמֶּן — devised by Haman, not the King. In that case, she tried to persuade him, the decree was revocable — see *Yosef Lekach; M'nos Halevi*.]

6. כִּי אֵיכָכָה אוּכַל וְרְאִיתִי — *For how can I bear to witness*. Esther impressed upon the King that her own personal and emotional well being was

פָּרַק ח ז
 זֶט
 מוֹלֹדֶתִי: וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשׁוּר־שׁ
 לְאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה וּלְמֹרְדֵּכַי הַיְּהוּדִי הַזֶּה
 בֵּית־הָמֶן נָתַתִּי לְאַסְתֵּר וְאֶתוֹ תָּלוּ עַל־
 הָעֵץ עַל אֲשֶׁר־שָׁלַח יָדוֹ בַּיְּהוּדִים:
 וְאַתֶּם כְּתֹבוּ עַל־הַיְּהוּדִים בְּטוֹב בְּעִינֵיכֶם
 בְּשֵׁם הַמֶּלֶךְ וְחַתְּמוּ בְּטַבַּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי־
 כָּתַב אֲשֶׁר־נִכְתַּב בְּשֵׁם־הַמֶּלֶךְ וְנַחְתּוּם
 בְּטַבַּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵין לְהָשִׁיב: וַיִּקְרְאוּ
 סִפְרֵי־הַמֶּלֶךְ בָּעֵת־הַהִיא בַּחֹדֶשׁ
 הַשְּׁלִישִׁי הוּא־חֹדֶשׁ סִיוֹן בְּשְׁלוֹשָׁה
 וְעֶשְׂרִים בּוֹ וַיִּכְתֹּב בְּכָל־אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה
 מֹרְדֵּכַי אֶל־הַיְּהוּדִים וְאֶל הָאֲחֻשְׁדָּרְפָּנִים

dependent on his favorable response to her plea. She would die of aggravation if her people were slaughtered. Even if they were left alive, but were constantly harassed, she would know no peace (*Rav Galico; M'nos Halevi; Yosef Lekach*).

7. —הִנֵּה בֵּית־הָמֶן נָתַתִּי לְאַסְתֵּר / *I have given Haman's estate to Esther* ... The King said: 'By my recent actions everyone will know that I am well disposed to you both, and anything you say will have royal force. Therefore, there is no need to annul the first decree; simply write a new decree as you see fit' (*Rashi*).

'Don't worry about the people in the environs of Shushan; since the word is out that Haman is dead and I transferred his estate to you and his power to Mordechai, you have nothing to fear. It is the far-away provinces you must reach' (*Alshich; D'na Pashra*).

8. —בְּטוֹב בְּעִינֵיכֶם / *Whatever you*

desire. [The King gave them *carte blanche* permission not to annul, but to override Haman's decree by wording a new decree in any manner they thought effective. This, of course, faced Mordechai and Esther with the dilemma of framing an edict that would not challenge the legal standing of Haman's decree but that would effectively neutralize it.]

The Holy One, blessed be He, now performed an unprecedented miracle. Was there ever in history such a miracle that Israel should wreak vengeance on the other nations and do with their enemies as they pleased? (*Midrash*).

The King had told them to adjust the first decree in a manner favorable to the Jews. The original edict (sent to אֲחֻשְׁדָּרְפָּנֵי־הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֶל־הַכּוֹהֲנִים ... וְאֶל הָעָם וְעַם הַשָּׂרִים *the satraps, governors and officials*) — which clearly spelled out the destruction) could not be revoked. Their hope was to modify the vaguely worded הכָּתַב —

VIII

7-9

Permission
is granted to
override the
decree

⁷ Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and Mordechai the Jew: 'Behold, I have given Haman's estate to Esther, and he has been hanged on the gallows because he plotted against the Jews. ⁸ You may write concerning the Jews whatever you desire, in the King's name, and seal it with the royal signet, for an edict which is written in the King's name and sealed with the royal signet may not be revoked.' ⁹ So the King's secretaries were summoned at that time, on the twenty-third day of the third month, that is, the month of Sivan, and it was written exactly as Mordechai had dictated to the Jews and to the satraps, the governors and officials of the provinces

the public copy of the decree — in a way that would specifically allow the Jews to kill their enemies (Vilna Gaon, *Malbim*)...

And when the rulers of each country received this new document allowing the Jews to avenge themselves on their enemies, they would unquestionably destroy the earlier decree because by then they would certainly have heard of Haman's hanging and the rise of Mordechai indicating that the King now sided with the Jews. Therefore, they could write whatever they wished without actually *contradicting* the first decree (*M'nos Halevi*).

9. [The events described in the first eight verses of this chapter took place on the 13th of Nissan. The narrative of the events of that day resumes in verse 15. Verses 9-14 describe the writing and the dispatching of the second decree, all of which took place on the 23rd of Sivan. The reason for this five-

verse, parenthetical insert is to continue the train of thought begun in verse 8 when Ahasuerus gave instructions that a second decree be composed.]

Although Mordechai and Esther were insistent upon immediate permission to countermand Haman's decree, they waited over two months before writing the all-important edict without which death still hovered over the head of the Jews. One reason for the delay is that Mordechai was waiting for the return to Shushan of Haman's couriers. He felt that it was essential that his letters be delivered by the same couriers. That would add legitimacy to the contents of the second letter despite the fact that it apparently contradicted the intent of Haman's royal decree (*Yosef Lekach*).

אל היהודים ואל האחשדרפנים והפחות
ושרי המדינות — To the Jews, and to
the satraps, the governors and of-
ficials. Haman had sent three docu-

והפחות ושרי המדינות אשר מהדו ועד-
כוש שבע ועשרים ומאה מדינה מדינה
ומדינה בכתבה ועם ועם כלשנו ואל-
היהודים בכתבם וכלשונם: ויכתב בשם
המלך אחשוורש ויחתם בטבעת המלך
וישלח ספרים ביד הרצים בסוסים
רכבי הרכש האחשתרנים בני הרמכים:
אשר נתן המלך ליהודים אשר בכל-
עיר-ועיר להקהל ולעמד על-נפשם
להשמיר להרג ולאבד את-כל-חיל עם
ומדינה הצרים אתם טף ונשים ושללם
לכוז: ביום אחד בכל-מדינות המלך
אחשוורש בשלושה עשר לחדש שנים-
עשר הוא-חדש אדר: פתשגן הכתב

י"א

י"ב

י"ג

ments to each province — one each to the satrap, governor, and officials as evidenced by the Hebrew *וְאֵל*, "and to the," separating the various categories [in 3:12]. Mordechai, however, sent two to each province: One to the Jews, *וְאֵל* and one to, the satraps, governors and officials (Yosef Lekach).

10. המלך. — ויחתם בטבעת. — *And sealed it with the King's signet* [which was in Mordechai's possession].

In this verse we see the verbs וישלח, ויכתב... ויחתם... וישלח, 'He wrote... he sealed... he sent,' Haman allowed others to attend to the mechanics of preparing and dispatching the decree. Mordechai, who wanted the Mitzvah of being instrumental in saving the Jews, took care of every detail himself (M'nos Halevi).

*He sent cour-
iers on horseback.* Having just returned from their first mission, they were tired. Mordechai wanted the new letters to be delivered as soon as possible even though there were eight and one-half months remaining before the 13th of Adar. Therefore, he supplied them with the swiftest animals available (Vilna Gaon).

— האחשתרנים בני הרמכים (here translated:) riders of swift mules bred of mares. The Sages do not know what these words mean (Megillah 18a). Rashi suggests that האחשתרנים are a species of swift camels; according to Ibn Ezra האחשתרנים are a species of mules, and הרמכים are mares.

[The word רמך — mare — is found in the Mishnah Kilayim 8:5

from Hodu to Cush, a hundred and twenty-seven provinces, to each province in its own script, and each people in its own language, and to the Jews in their own script and language. ¹⁰ He wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed it with the King's signet. He sent letters by couriers on horseback; riders of swift mules bred of mares, ¹¹ to the effect that the King had permitted the Jews of every single city to organize and defend themselves; to destroy, slay, and exterminate every armed force of any people or province that threaten them, along with their children and women, and to plunder their possessions, ¹² on a single day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, namely, upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, that is, the month of Adar. ¹³ The contents of the document were to be promulgated in

where the meaning is a mule whose dam is known to be a mare].

11. לְהִקָּהֵל — *To organize*. Only by organizing and unifying themselves in begging for G-d's assistance could the Jews be victorious despite being seriously outnumbered (*D'na Pashra, Yosef Lekach*).

הַצָּרִים אֹתָם — *That threaten them*. The King gave them the right of organized self-defense only against the forces that threatened them, but they were permitted to be aggressive against descendants of Amalek (*Rav Galico; Alshich*).

12. בְּיוֹם אֶחָד — *On a single day*. It was Mordechai's wish that the Jews avoid taking spoils in order to

demonstrate that self-defense was their only motivation. He, therefore, worded the edict that the assembly, defense, destruction, extermination, and taking of spoils must all be accomplished on the same day so that there would no time for the gathering of spoils. This was in contrast to Haman, who ordered the wholesale destruction to take place in one day, with the following day being left for looting (*Malbim*).

13. בְּתִשְׁעֵן הַכֶּתֶב — *The contents of the document*. Unlike the contents of Haman's decree which were vague and secret [see Commentary on 3:14], Mordechai's decree was specific and הַצָּרִים אֹתָם — *published to all peoples* that the Jews were to be ready on that day to avenge themselves (*Kad haKemach*).

לְהַנְתֵּן דָּת בְּכָל-מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה גָלוּי
לְכָל-הָעַמִּים וּלְהִיּוֹת הַיְּהוּדִים עֲתוּדִים
לַיּוֹם הַזֶּה לְהִנָּקם מֵאִיְבֵיהֶם: הִרְצִים
רַכְבֵּי הָרֶכֶשׁ הָאֲשֶׁתְּרָנִים יֵצְאוּ
מִבְּהֵלִים וּרְחוּפִים בְּדָבָר הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהָדָת
נִתְּנָה בְּשׁוֹשׁן הַבִּירָה: וּמֶרְדֵּכַי יֵצֵא
מִלִּפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בִּלְבוּשׁ מַלְכוּת תְּכֵלֶת
וְחֹזֶר וְעֹטְרָת זָהָב גְּדוּלָּה וְתַכְרִיף בּוֹץ
וְאַרְגָּמָן וְהָעִיר שׁוֹשׁן צָהֳלָה וְשִׂמְחָה:
לַיְּהוּדִים הָיְתָה אוֹרָה וְשִׂמְחָה וְשׁוֹשׁן
וַיִּקָּר: וּבְכָל-מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה וּבְכָל-עִיר

14. — Went forth in urgent haste. [Lit. 'bewildered and pushed'].

Even though they rode swift animals, they nevertheless rode in urgent haste (*Ma'amar Mordechai*).

When Haman's decree was dispatched [3:15], the word מְבֵהֵלִים — 'bewildered' — is not used. The couriers were not at all bewildered by a decree calling for the annihilation of Jews because Jews are frequently massacred. So when Haman issued his decree hurriedly — they dutifully went hurriedly. But here, when Mordechai's decree in favor of, and protecting, the Jews was issued — an act without precedent — יֵצְאוּ מִבְּהֵלִים — they went forth 'bewildered' — not understanding the King's intentions (*M'nos Halevi*).

— And the edict was distributed in Shushan the capitol. Only after the couriers were urgently dispatched and well on their way — too late for the anti-

Semites in the capitol to influence the King against sending them — was the edict distributed in the capitol itself (*Malbim*).

[See Commentary on 1:2 for difference between שׁוֹשׁן הַבִּירָה — *Shushan the capitol*, and עִיר שׁוֹשׁן — *the city of Shushan*.]

15. — And Mordechai left... This verse is a chronological continuation of verse 8 after the parenthetical break of verses 9-14 [see Commentary on verse 9] (*M'nos Halevi*).

Only when Mordechai was completely assured that the Jews would be saved did he allow himself to appear in royal attire (*Alshich*).

[This verse is one of the four verses said aloud in the synagogue by the congregation during the public reading of the *Megillah*. See Commentary on 2:5].

— And the city of Shushan was cheerful and was happy. 'The city of Shushan' i.e., the residence of the Jews (*Ibn Ezra*).

VIII

14-17

every province, and be published to all peoples so that the Jews should be ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies. ¹⁴ The couriers, riders of swift mules, went forth in urgent haste by order of the King, and the edict was distributed in Shushan the capitol.

Shushan
rejoices;
the Jews
have
gladness

¹⁵ Mordechai left the King's presence clad in royal apparel of blue and white with a large gold crown and a robe of fine linen and purple, then the city of Shushan was cheerful and glad. ¹⁶ The Jews had light and gladness, and joy and honor. ¹⁷ Likewise, in every province, and in every city, wherever the

Because Mordechai stumbled about in sackcloth and ashes, he merited promenading about in such grandeur; having torn his clothing for the sake of his people, he merited donning the robes of a monarch; for having put dust on his forehead, he merited wearing a large gold crown; because the city of Shushan had been bewildered, it was filled with cheer and joy (*Rav Galico*).

The joy was so complete that even the stones, so to speak, of Shushan rejoiced (*D'na Pashra*).

16. לַיהוּדִים הָיְתָה אוֹרָה — *The Jews had light.* Like one who emerges into bright light after having stayed in total darkness for a long time. (So stark was the 'darkness' of the Jewish nation facing impending doom and so brilliant the sudden miracle of the salvation, that the Jews were as blinded as a person emerging from darkness into sunlight.) (*Ibn Ezra; M'nos Halevi*).

Rav Yehudah said: אוֹרָה — *light*, refers to Torah; שְׂמֵחָה — *gladness*,

refers to holiday; שִׂשׂוֹן — *joy*, refers to circumcision; and יָקָר — *honor*, refers to תְּפִלִּין — *tefillin* (phylacteries) [i.e. they were finally able to resume the study of Torah without hinderance; so with the holidays, circumcision and tefillin] (*Megillah 16b*).

Why, then, didn't the *Megillah* specifically mention that the Jews had 'Torah, holidays, circumcision and tefillin'? The essence of the redemption was that the Jews attained a heightened realization of the true nature of light, gladness, joy, and honor. They once thought that the true source of light is the sun; after the miracle, they realized that Torah is the only true light. Even the most brilliant material light is but a faint approximation in allegorical terms of spiritual light. So it was with the other commandments. The Jews felt gladness, joy, and honor only in the performance of mitzvos (*S'fas Emes*).

[This verse is one of the four verses read aloud in the Synagogue by the Congregation during the

וְעִיר מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר דְּבַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ וּדְתוֹ מֵגִיעַ
שְׁמָקָה וְשִׁשּׁוֹן לַיהוּדִים מִשְׁתָּה וַיּוֹם טוֹב
וְרַבִּים מֵעַמִּי הָאָרֶץ מְתִיבִים כִּי־נִפְל
פָּחַד־הַיהוּדִים עֲלֵיהֶם:

פֶּרֶק ט א וּבִשְׁנֵי עָשָׂר חֹדֶשׁ הוּא־חֹדֶשׁ אֲדָר
בְּשִׁלּוּשָׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם בּוֹ אֲשֶׁר הִגִּיעַ דְּבַר־
הַמֶּלֶךְ וּדְתוֹ לְהַעֲשׂוֹת בַּיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר שִׁבְרוּ
אִיבֵי הַיהוּדִים לְשִׁלוֹט בָּהֶם וְנִהְפָּוך הוּא
אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁלְטוּ הַיהוּדִים הֵמָּה בְּשִׁנְאֵיהֶם:
נִקְהָלוּ הַיהוּדִים בְּעָרֵיהֶם בְּכָל־מְדִינוֹת ב
הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשׁוּרוֹשׁ לְשַׁלַּח יָד בַּמִּבְקָשִׁי
רָעָתָם וְאִישׁ לֹא־עָמַד בַּפְּנֵיהֶם כִּי־נִפְל
פָּחַדָם עַל־כָּל־הָעַמִּים: וְכָל־שְׂרִי ג

public reading of the Megillah. See Commentary on 2:5].

17. מְתִיבִים — *Professed themselves Jews*. They were not accepted as true proselytes because their conversion, motivated by fear, was not genuine. Therefore the verse says מְתִיבִים — i.e. 'feigned Jewishness' when they really weren't and had no intention of

becoming serious proselytes (*Vilna Gaon*).

[Some commentators say that the amusing Purim custom of masquerading in outlandish costumes is derived from this verse. Just as non-Jews 'masqueraded' as proselytes in order to curry favor, so we masquerade merrily to commemorate the miracle].

IX

1. אִיבֵי הַיהוּדִים... הֵמָּה בְּשִׁנְאֵיהֶם — *The enemies of the Jews ... over their adversaries*. אוֹיֵב, 'enemy' is

one who seeks to personally inflict harm on someone he dislikes; שׂוֹנֵא, 'adversary' is one who rejoices at

King's command and his decree reached, the Jews had gladness and joy, a feast and a holiday. Moreover, many from among the people of the land professed themselves Jews; for the fear of the Jews had fallen upon them.

IX

1-3

The
turnabout:
the Jews
avenge
themselves

¹ And so, on the the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, when the King's command and edict were about to be enforced—on the very day that the enemies of the Jews expected to gain the upper hand over them—and it was turned about: The Jews gained the upper hand over their adversaries; ² the Jews organized themselves in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, to attack those who sought their hurt; and no one stood in their way, for fear of them had fallen upon all the peoples. ³ Moreover, all the

the ill-fortune of someone he dislikes even though he himself may not be inclined to inflict it personally. This is the meaning of the verse: On the very day when *the enemies* [אויבים] of the Jews, planned to inflict bodily harm on the Jews to gain the upper hand, the tables were turned and *the Jews prevailed*. So total was the Jewish victory that they prevailed even over their שונאים, lesser enemies, the *adversaries* who did not themselves seek to inflict bodily harm (Vilna Gaon).

[See Commentary on verse 5 for further distinctions between אויב, enemy and שונא, adversary].

2. נִקְהְלוּ הַיְּהוּדִים — *The Jews organized themselves*. Many Jews who, under fear of Haman's edict fled to the anonymity of the smaller villages where the decree was not well known and where they could safely hide, now returned and assembled בְּעָרֵיהֶם — in their cities (Rav Arama).

בְּמִבְקָשֵׁי רָעָתָם — *Who sought their hurt*. The Jews limited their vengeance to those who would hurt them, that is why לא עָמַד נָאִישׁ לֹא עָמַד — *no one withstood them*, for fear of them had fallen on all the peoples (Yad Hamelech).

הַמְדִּינוֹת וְהָאֲחֻשְׁדֵּרפָּנִים וְהַפָּחוֹת וְעַשִּׂי
הַמֶּלֶאכָה אֲשֶׁר לְמֶלֶךְ מִנְשָׁאִים אֶת־
הַיְּהוּדִים כִּי־נָפַל פָּחַד־מֶרְדֵּכִי עֲלֵיהֶם:
כִּי־גָדוֹל מֶרְדֵּכִי בְּבֵית הַמֶּלֶךְ וְשִׁמְעוֹ
הוֹלֵךְ בְּכָל־הַמְּדִינוֹת כִּי־הָאִישׁ מֶרְדֵּכִי
הוֹלֵךְ וְגָדוֹל: וַיָּבּוּ הַיְּהוּדִים בְּכָל־אֹיְבֵיהֶם
מִכַּת־חֶרֶב וְהָרֵג וְאַבְדָּן וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְּשִׁנְאֵיהֶם
כְּרָצוֹנָם: וַיִּבְשׁוּשָׁן הַבִּירָה הָרְגוּ הַיְּהוּדִים
וְאַבְדַּר חֲמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת אִישׁ: וְאֵת

3. כִּי־נָפַל פָּחַד־מֶרְדֵּכִי עֲלֵיהֶם — *Because the fear of Mordechai had fallen upon them.* The previous verse refers to פָּחַד — *The fear (of the Jews)*; this verse indicates פָּחַד מֶרְדֵּכִי — *the fear of Mordechai.* To the general public (verse 2) — who did not know Mordechai personally — the "fear of the Jews" sufficed as a deterrent; but for the officials etc., to whom Mordechai was an intimate, familiar personality — and, even more, who knew him as prime minister of the entire kingdom — *the fear of Mordechai*, as an individual, was the deterrent (*Vilna Gaon*).

There was no lack of people who were quite ready, as per Haman's decree — to go out and fight the Jews, but they did not go, *for the fear of Mordechai had fallen upon them.*

4. כִּי גָדוֹל מֶרְדֵּכִי — *For Mordechai was now preeminent* [lit. 'great.']

A government usually has three high officials: one in charge of the palace; one for matters of state; and one for war and foreign affairs. Mordechai dominated all three areas. Therefore, the verse tells us that *Mordechai grew influential*

in the royal palace; his fame was spreading throughout all the provinces [i.e. in matters of state]; for the man Mordechai grew increasingly greater [in matters of war and foreign conquests] (*Targum; Malbim*).

The Commentators remark how, at first, people assumed that Mordechai's promotion was entirely due to his role in having saved the King from assassination. Later they came to realize what a great man he was in his own right, and his fame spread.

5. [After the parenthetical break of the last two verses, this verse continues the description of what the assembled Jews did on the 13th of Adar].

At all their enemies. The Jews tried to establish who were אוֹיְבִים — *enemies*, and who were שׂוֹנְאִים — *adversaries*. An אוֹיֵב — *enemy* is one who openly professes his hatred while a שׂוֹנֵא — *adversary* is one whose hatred is within (*M'nos Halevi*).

According to the *Malbim* the שׂוֹנְאִים were the outspoken anti-

IX provincial officials, satraps, and governors and those
4-7 that conduct the King's affairs, deferred to the Jews because the fear of Mordechai had fallen upon them.
⁴ For Mordechai was now preeminent in the royal palace and his fame was spreading throughout all the provinces, for the man Mordechai grew increasingly greater. ⁵ And the Jews struck at all their enemies with the sword, slaughtering and annihilating; they treated their enemies as they pleased. ⁶ In Shushan the capitol, the Jews slew and annihilated five hundred men. ⁷ including

Semites who were slain, and the **אויבים** were those with hatred in their hearts, who were merely subject to humiliation.

6. **ושושן הבירה** — In Shushan the capitol. Shushan was divided into two parts [see Commentary on 1:2 s.v. **שושן** — 'Shushan'.] The gentiles — many of whom had been staunch supporters of Haman as well as enemies of the Jews — resided in **שושן הבירה** — the City of Shushan. The Jews were, therefore, afraid to assemble in the hostile atmosphere of the city of Shushan. Instead they assembled in the palace compound — **שושן הבירה**, Shushan the capitol — near to the King and Mordechai where they felt relatively safe. Nevertheless, many gentiles came to avenge Haman's death in arrogant disregard of the close proximity of the King to Mordechai (*M'nos Halevi; Yad Hamelech*).

איש—Men. The emphatic word **"איש"** *man*, [a title of honor used for such great figures as Moses and Mordechai] implies that these five hundred men were prominent people of renown (*Yosef Lekach*).

וְאֵת פְּרִשְׁנָדָּסָא ... עֶשְׂרֵת בְּנֵי הָמָן — Including Parshandasa ... the ten sons of Haman. The names of Haman's ten sons are listed because each one was esteemed and prominent (*Targum*).

The ten sons of Haman and the word **עֶשְׂרֵת**, 'ten', which follows, should be said [by one reading the Megillah on Purim] in one breath ... because they all died together (*Megilla 16b*).

The letter Vav [ו] of *Vayzasa* is enlarged in the Megillah like a long pole to indicate that they were all strung [one underneath the other] on one long pole (*Megilla 16b*).

Each son's name along with the word **וְאֵת** ["and"] is written on a separate line, one on top of the other in the form of a half brick over a half brick, and a whole brick over a whole brick unlike the other poetic portions in the Torah which are written 'in the form of a half brick over a whole brick. The half brick over whole brick construction (overlapping bricks in the form of all brick structures) adds strength whereas the whole over whole will be weak. Haman's sons are written

וְאֵת	פֶּרֶשְׁנֶהָ	פֶּרֶק ט
וְאֵת	וְלָפֹן	חֵיב
וְאֵת	אֶסְפָּתָא:	ח יִסִּיא ש' זעירא ת' זעירא
וְאֵת	פּוֹרְתָא	
וְאֵת	אֲדִלָּא	
וְאֵת	אֲרִידְתָּא:	ט יִסִּיא ר' זעירא ש' זעירא
וְאֵת	פְּרָמְשָׁתָא	
וְאֵת	אֲרִיסִי	
וְאֵת	אֲרִידִי	
וְאֵת	וְאֵתָא:	י י' רבתי ד' זעירא
עֲשֶׂרֶת		
<p>בְּנֵי הָמָן בְּנֵי-הַמֶּלֶךְ צִרְרַת הַיְּהוּדִים הָרְגוּ וּבִבְזָה לֹא שָׁלְחוּ אֶת-יָדָם: בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא בָּא מִסְפֵּר קְהֵרוּגִים בְּשׁוֹשָׁן הַבֵּירָה לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ: וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה בְּשׁוֹשָׁן הַבֵּירָה הָרְגוּ הַיְּהוּדִים וְאֶבֶר חֲמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת אִישׁ וְאֵת עֲשֶׂרֶת בְּנֵי-הָמָן</p>		

in this manner so that 'They should never rise again from their downfall' (*Megillah 16a*).

Names of important people are usually written prominently on a separate line. Hence, the ten sons of Haman were so listed, each on an individual line (*Yosef Lekach*).

[Their prominence could not save them from death, thus pointing up to the greatness of the triumph].

The word וְאֵת ['and'] preceding each name is a continuation of חֲמֵשׁ אִישׁ מֵאוֹת 'five hundred men ... and ...' It tells us that each one of Haman's sons was equal in prominence to all the other five hundred enemies of the Jews who were slain in Shushan (*Rav Galico*).

10. עֲשֶׂרֶת בְּנֵי הָמָן — *Haman's ten sons*. These were the ones who had instigated the decree by which Ahasuerus halted the building of the Temple soon after he ascended to the throne (*Meg. 16a; Rashi quoting Seder Olam*).

וּבִבְזָה לֹא שָׁלְחוּ אֶת-יָדָם — *But they did not lay their hands on the spoils*. Even though Mordechai's decree seemingly permitted it, the Jews, in unison, did not lay their hands on the spoils. Rather, the spoils went directly to the royal treasuries in order to pacify the King and to make it obvious that the Jews entertained no financial considerations in selecting those they killed (*Rashi*;

IX	Parshandasa	and
8-12	Dalphon	and
	Aspasa	⁸ and
	Porasa	and
	Adalia	and
	Aridasa	⁹ and
	Parmashta	and
	Arisai	and
	Aridai	and
	Vaizasa	¹⁰ the ten

sons of Haman, son of Hammedasa, the Jews' enemy; but they did not lay their hand on the spoils.

That same day the number of those killed in Shushan the capitol was reported to the King. ¹² The King said unto Queen Esther: 'In Shushan the Capitol the Jews have slain and annihilated five hundred men as well as the ten sons of Haman; what

Ibn Ezra; D'na Pashra; Megilas Sesarim).

In not enjoying the spoils of its victory, Israel remedied the sin of its ancestors in the days of Saul. Then, they were commanded by Samuel to wage war against Amalek and not to plunder the spoils. They won the war, but ignored the command to desist from looting [see I Samuel 15]. In the time of Mordechai and Esther, that sin was atoned for because the people were permitted to enjoy the spoils, but refrained from doing it (*Nachal Eshkol*).

[Mordechai was a descendant of King Saul and he corrected Saul's iniquity of allowing Agag to live long enough to beget a son who was the forefather of Haman.]

It was obviously most difficult for poor Jews to restrain themselves

from taking spoils. In reward for their restraint, it was established that, throughout all generations, the poor — without exception and investigation as to need — will be the recipients of מתנות לאביונים — 'gifts to the poor' (*Gerer Rebbe*).

11. מספר ההרוגים — *The number of those killed.*

The enemies of the Jews reported the number of prominent Shushanites killed by the Jews that day hoping to kindle the King's anger. But, miraculously, the King did not stop the Jews from continuing on the next day (*Rav Galico*).

The only Jews who participated in the fighting in Shushan the capitol were those Jews who resided there. Those Jews who resided in the city and were in the capitol only

בְּשֹׂאֵר מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ מִהָ עָשׂוּ וּמֵה-
שְׂאֵלָתוֹ וַיִּנָּתֶן לָהּ וּמֵה-בְּקָשְׁתָּהּ עוֹד
וַתַּעַשׂ: וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר אִם-עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ יג
טוֹב יִנָּתֶן גַּם-מָחָר לַיהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּשׁוֹשָׁן
לְעִשׂוֹת כְּכַת הַיּוֹם וְאֵת עֲשֶׂרֶת בְּנֵי-הָמֶן
יָתְלוּ עַל-הָעֵץ: וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַעֲשׂוֹת יד
כֵּן וַתִּנָּתֶן דָּת בְּשׁוֹשָׁן וְאֵת עֲשֶׂרֶת בְּנֵי-
הָמֶן תָּלוּ: וַיִּקְהָלוּ הַיְּהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר- טו
בְּשׁוֹשָׁן גַּם בַּיּוֹם אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ
אָדָר וַיַּהֲרֹגוּ בְּשׁוֹשָׁן שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת אִישׁ
וּבְבִזָּה לֹא שָׁלְחוּ אֶת-יָדָם: וּשְׂאֵר טז
הַיְּהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּמְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ נִקְהָלוּ

temporarily did not participate
(*Me'am Loez*).

12. בְּשֹׂאֵר מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ מִהָ עָשׂוּ — *What must they have done in the rest of the King's provinces?* The Talmud says that his mode of expression indicates the King was angry, but an angel forced him to speak kindly.

The King said: 'The Jews have slain five hundred men in Shushan the capitol along with Haman's ten sons. I never realized that there were so many violent anti-Semites right here in the capitol. Now I can imagine how many there must have been in other parts of the kingdom, and with what danger you people were faced. Tell me what else you request and it will be granted' (*Malbim*).

13. וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר — *Esther said*. By requesting of the King that he officially allow the Jews to avenge themselves in the city of Shushan on the 14th of Adar and to publicly

hang Haman's ten sons — requests which were not contained in the King's decree — Esther wanted to make it obvious to everyone that the Jews' actions were in keeping with the King's pleasure, thereby freeing the Jews from all danger of later persecution (*Vilna Gaon*).

[The Jews avenged themselves in the capitol on the first day, but not in the city (Commentary 9:6). Esther now sought permission to extend the battle to the city on the next day].

Esther requested that a powerful example be set in Shushan to frighten the enemies of Jewry throughout the realm (*Malbim*), and to destroy Haman's staunchest supporters. She claimed that this was the only guarantee that the surviving enemies would not attempt to avenge their comrades on the following day (*M'nos Halevi*).

וַיָּתְלוּ עַל-הָעֵץ — *Be hanged on the gallows*. And thereby make a public spectacle out of them and frighten

IX

13-16

The Jews in Shushan are granted a second day

must they have done in the rest of the King's provinces! What is your petition now? It shall be granted you. What is your request further? It shall be fulfilled.' ¹³ Esther replied: 'If it pleases His Majesty, allow the Jews who are in Shushan to act tomorrow as they did today, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged on the gallows.' ¹⁴ The King ordered that this be done. A decree was distributed in Shushan, and they hanged Haman's ten sons. ¹⁵ The Jews that were in Shushan assembled again on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar, and slew three hundred men in Shushan; but they did not lay their hand on the spoils.

¹⁶ The rest of the Jews throughout the King's

all who see them (*Megilas Sesarim*).

14. וְתַתֵּן דָּח בְּשׁוּשָׁן — *A decree was distributed in Shushan.* To ensure that the Jews would not be afraid to assemble on the following day, Ahasuerus legalized Esther's request by issuing a formal decree (*Alshich*).

וְאֵת עֲשֶׂרֶת בְּנֵי־הָמָן חָלוּ — *And they hanged Haman's ten sons.* As soon as the decree was issued, Haman's sons were hanged (*Maamar Mordechai*), and Haman's wife, Zeresh, fled (*Targum*).

15. שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת אִישׁ — *Three hundred men.* Having witnessed the destruction of the previous day, the enemies of the Jews were afraid to show their faces. The Jews, therefore, killed less men that day in the entire city of Shushan than they killed the day before in the capitol alone (*Yad Hamelech*). Nevertheless, the Jews killed 300 Amalekites who were brazen enough to seek

vengeance for the death of those killed the day before (*Ma'amar Mordechai*).

וְכַבְדָּהּ לֹא שָׁלְחוּ אֶת־יָדָם — *But they did not lay their hands on the spoils,* on the second day, as well, so they could not be accused of having mercenary interests (*Yad Hamelech*).

There were those who said that the Jews refrained from looting on 13 Adar only because the number of bodies was overwhelming. On 14 Adar, however, when less were involved, the Jews would surely give way to looting. On this day too, however, they refrained from taking spoils (*Ma'amar Mordechai*).

16-17. [These verses expand upon verse 5 and tell us that שָׂרָא — *the rest of the Jews*; i.e., those who resided outside of Shushan, had organized themselves on the thirteenth of Adar, killing 75,000 of their enemy and abstain-

וְעָמַד עַל-נַפְשָׁם וְנוֹחַ מֵאִיְבֵיהֶם וְהָרוּג
 בְּשִׁנְאֵיהֶם חֲמִשָּׁה וּשְׁבַעִים אֶלֶף וּבִבְזָה
 לֹא שָׁלְחוּ אֶת-יָגָם: בְּיוֹם-שְׁלוֹשָׁה עָשָׂר
 לְחֹדֶשׁ אֲדָר וְנוֹחַ בְּאֶרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר בּוֹ
 וַעֲשָׂה אֹתוֹ יוֹם מִשְׁתָּה וּשְׂמִיחָה:
 וְהִיהוּדִיִּים אֲשֶׁר-בְּשׁוּשָׁן נִקְהְלוּ
 בְּשְׁלוֹשָׁה עָשָׂר בּוֹ וּבְאֶרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר בּוֹ
 וְנוֹחַ בְּחִמְשָׁה עָשָׂר בּוֹ וַעֲשָׂה אֹתוֹ יוֹם
 מִשְׁתָּה וּשְׂמִיחָה: עַל-כֵּן הִיהוּדִים
 הַפְּרוּזִים הַיֹּשְׁבִים בְּעָרֵי הַפְּרוּזוֹת עֹשִׂים
 אֶת יוֹם אֶרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ אֲדָר
 שְׂמִיחָה וּמִשְׁתָּה וְיוֹם טוֹב וּמְשָׁלַח מְנוֹת

פֶּרֶק ט
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ing from taking spoils. Unlike the Jews of Shushan who were engaged in battle for two days, the other Jews of the kingdom gained relief from their enemies on the fourteenth of Adar and devoted that day to celebration of the miracle.]

18. [This verse expands upon verses 6 and 15. The Jews of Shushan — the capitol and the city — fought on both the thirteenth and fourteenth of Adar, gained relief from their enemies on the fifteenth, and celebrated on that day.]

וַעֲשָׂה אֹתוֹ יוֹם מִשְׁתָּה — *Making it a day of feasting.* Despite their exhaustion from a two-day battle, the Jews of Shushan celebrated on the next day because it was clear that there would be no reprisals (*Rav Galico*).

19. הַפְּרוּזִים — *Unwalled.* [Lit. 'unfortified.'

שְׂמִיחָה — *Gladness.* i.e., [a day] on which eulogizing the dead is

prohibited (*Meg. 5b*)

וּמִשְׁתָּה — *And feasting.* i.e., [a day] on which fasting is prohibited (*ibid.*)

טוֹב — *And holiday-making.* [Lit. 'A holiday']. i.e., [a day] on which מְלָאכָה, 'work' is prohibited (*ibid.*)

[Cessation from מְלָאכָה, work, is the one facet of the Purim observance not instituted by Mordechai nor undertaken for posterity. See commentary to verse 22 s.v. יְמֵי מִשְׁתָּה 'days of feasting.'].

וּמְשָׁלַח מְנוֹת — *Sending delicacies.* The plural מְנוֹת, *ready-to-eat foods*, is used, say the Sages, because each gift must consist of at least two kinds of food (*Megillah 7a*).

[The law of 'Shushan Purim' — celebrating Purim on the 15th day of Adar in walled cities in commemoration of the victory in Shushan — is not specifically stated in the Megillah. It is implied in

provinces organized and defended themselves gaining relief from their foes slaying seventy-five thousand of their enemies — but they did not lay their hand on the spoils. ¹⁷ That was the thirteenth day of the month of Adar; and they gained relief on the fourteenth day, making it a day of feasting and gladness. ¹⁸ But the Jews that were in Shushan assembled on both the thirteenth and fourteenth, and they gained relief on the fifteenth, making it a day of feasting and gladness. ¹⁹ That is why Jewish villagers who live in unwalled towns, celebrate the fourteenth day of the month of Adar as an occasion of gladness and feasting, for holiday-making and for sending delicacies to one another.

verses 19 and 21 and so established by the Rabbis.]

The historical sequence is as follows: The Sanhedrin wanted to establish Purim as a holiday לפִּירְסוּמִי נִיקָא to celebrate the miracle of the deliverance. Since the spontaneous celebration throughout the Empire originally took place on the fourteenth of Adar — the day the Jews gained relief from their enemies — Mordechai, as head of the Sanhedrin, proclaimed that day as a festival. Shushan, however, had a miracle all its own and its original celebration was the fifteenth of Adar. Rather than limit the celebration of the fifteenth to Shushan — a city that could hardly be expected to remain Jewish for all time — the Rabbis ordained that the fifteenth, Shushan-Purim, should be celebrated in all cities which, like Shushan, had walls around them. However, this created a problem: Israel lay in ruins at that time, and Jerusa-

lem was unwall'd; its status would be inferior to other walled cities throughout the world, and Jerusalem would have to celebrate its Purim on the fourteenth like an ordinary unwall'd city. To accord honor to Jerusalem, and to Israel, and to attach the remembrance of Israel in some way to the miracle, the Rabbis decreed that all cities that were walled מִיָּמֹת יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־נֹון — 'from the days of Joshua son of Nun' (who led the conquest of Israel) would celebrate Purim on the fifteenth of Adar, thus including Jerusalem in the celebration. Shushan itself, which was unwall'd in the time of Joshua, was accorded a special status 'because the miracle was performed there' (*Megillah 2b; Rami-bam; M'nos Halevi; Torah T'mimah*).

There were, of course, many walled cities during the days of Joshua. All of them were destroyed during the course of history, however, and,

פֶּרֶק ט כַּכֵּב
אִישׁ לְרַעְיָהּ: וַיִּכְתֹּב מֶרְדֵּכַי אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים
הָאֵלֶּה וַיִּשְׁלַח סְפָרִים אֶל־כָּל־הַיְּהוּדִים
אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל־מְדִינוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֻׁרוּשׁ
הַקְּרוּבִים וְהָרְחוֹקִים: לִקְיָם עֲלֵיהֶם
לְהַיּוֹת עֲשִׂים אֶת יוֹם אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר
לְחֹדֶשׁ אֲדָר וְאֵת יוֹם־חֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר בּוֹ
בְּכָל־שָׁנָה וּשְׁנָה: בְּיָמִים אֲשֶׁר־נָחוּ בָּהֶם
הַיְּהוּדִים מֵאִיְבֵיהֶם וְהַחֹדֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר נִהְפָּךְ
לָהֶם מִיָּגוֹן לְשִׂמְחָה וּמֵאֵבֶל לְיוֹם טוֹב
לַעֲשׂוֹת אוֹתָם יְמֵי מְשֻׁתָּה וּשְׂמִיחָה

even though they may have been rebuilt, there is no way of knowing whether they stand today on their original sites. This applies even to Shushan itself. As a result, the only city in the world that definitely celebrates its Purim only on the fifteenth is Jerusalem. The other ancient walled cities read the Megillah with a blessing on the fourteenth and again, without a blessing, on the fifteenth: Those cities are Ashdod, Ashkelon, Beer Sheva, Beit Sha'an, Gush Khalav, Hebron, Haifa, Tiberias, Jaffa, Lod, Gaza, Acco, Safed, Ramleh, and Shechem (*Ziv Haminhagim*).

20. וַיִּכְתֹּב מֶרְדֵּכַי אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה — *Mordechai recorded these events.* i.e. He wrote this Megillah exactly as it appears in its present text (*Rashi*).

Mordechai himself recorded these events to ensure the continued annual celebration of the festival of Purim (*Ibn Ezra*).

It was Mordechai's aim to firmly establish Purim as a festival so that the Jews would never forget the

miracle. He therefore ordained that the Megillah be read annually and that the observance take place on the 14th of Adar in all unwalled cities and on the 15th in the walled cities. He also established that there need not be a cessation from *מלאכה* — *work* on that festival (*Rav Galico*).

הַקְּרוּבִים וְהָרְחוֹקִים — *Near and far.* Mordechai committed these instructions to writing and sent them to all the provinces, the near and far-away villages and walled cities throughout Ahasuerus' empire, and throughout the world (*Me'am Loez*).

21. לִקְיָם עֲלֵיהֶם — *Charging them.* Mordechai's intention was to unify all Jews throughout the world in the celebration — even those Jews who had tried to escape Haman's decree by fleeing, and who, therefore, thought their own personal safety had not been jeopardized (*D'na Pashra*).

אֶת יוֹם אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ אֲדָר וְאֵת יוֹם חֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר בּוֹ — *The fourteenth*

20-22 ²⁰ Mordechai recorded these events and sent letters to all the Jews throughout the provinces of King Ahasuerus, near and far, ²¹ charging them that they should observe annually the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar, ²² as the days on which the Jews gained relief from their enemies, and the month which had been transformed for them from one of sorrow to gladness, and from mourning to festivity. They were to observe them as days of feasting and gladness, and

and fifteenth. . . [i.e. the fourteenth in walled and the fifteenth in un-walled cities].

בְּכָל־שָׁנָה וּשְׁנָה — Annually. The festival of Purim will never be abolished even in the days of the Messiah (Talmud Yerushalmi, Meg. 1:4)

22. בְּיָמִים אֲשֶׁר־נָחַו בָּהֶם הַיְּהוּדִים — As the days on which the Jews gained relief. The celebration was not to commemorate the downfall of our enemies; It is written בְּנִפְּוֹל אוֹיְבֶךָ אַל תִּשְׂמַח, rejoice not at the downfall of your enemy (Proverbs 24:17). Rather, the celebration is in commemoration of the redemption and salvation of the Jews. This is the intent of 'as the days on which the Jews gained relief'. For this reason the celebration is made — not on the day of victory — but on the day of 'relief' — אֲשֶׁר־נָחַו. (Me'am Loez)

On a leap year — when there are two Adars — Purim is celebrated in the Adar closest to Nissan (i.e., the second Adar) just as the original miracle of Purim occurred on the Adar closest to Nissan and because Nissan is the historic month of Jewish redemption [see commentary

on verse 27] (M'nos Halevi).

יָמֵי מִשְׂתָּה וְשִׂמְחָה . . . וכו' — Days of feasting and gladness . . . etc. Feasting — eating and drinking and merry-making — was instituted on Purim because the miracles in the Megillah occurred through feasting: the death of Vashti, the coronation of Esther, Haman's downfall. Mordechai permitted work on Purim because it is forbidden to proclaim new holidays similar to those given by the Torah. Instead, he instituted מִשְׁלָח — sending delicacies, and מִתְּנוּת לְאֲבִינִים — gifts to the poor (Me'am Loez).

'As physical life was threatened here and physical life saved; so, apart from the public recital of the story handed down to us perpetuating the event, Purim stresses the enjoyment of festivities, mutual gifts and consideration for our poorer brethren. Together with this we should joyfully remember how life was given to us again, and in this feeling of joy we should each revive the spirit of our common brotherhood and give it greater scope by bringing cheer to our less fortunate ones' (Rav S. R. Hirsch, Horeb, trans. Dayan Dr. I. Grunfeld).

פרק ט
כג-כו
וּמִשְׁלַח מְנוֹת אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ וּמִתְּנוֹת
לְאֶבְיָנִים: וְקִבַּל הַיְּהוּדִים אֶת אֲשֶׁר-
הֵחֵלוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר-כָּתַב מֶרְדֵּכַי
אֲלֵיהֶם: כִּי הָמָן בֶּן-הַמֶּדְתָּא הָאֲנָגִי צָרָר
כָּל-הַיְּהוּדִים חָשֵׁב עַל-הַיְּהוּדִים לְאַבְדָּם
וְהִפֵּל פֹּרַח הוּא הַגּוֹרֵל לְהָמָם וּלְאַבְדָּם:
כה
וּבְבֹאָהּ לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אָמַר עַם-הַסֹּפֶר
יָשׁוּב מִחֲשֻׁבְתּוֹ הִרְעָה אֲשֶׁר-חָשֵׁב עַל-
הַיְּהוּדִים עַל-רֹאשׁוֹ וְתָלוּ אֹתוֹ וְאֶת-בָּנָיו
כו
עַל-הָעֵץ: עַל-כֵּן קָרָאוּ לַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה
פּוּרִים עַל-שֵׁם הַפּוּר עַל-כֵּן עַל-כָּל-

Sending delicacies to one another 'At least two gifts [מנות – gifts, being plural] to one man' (*Megillah 7a*).

'The more friends one sends gifts to, the more praiseworthy he is' (*Rambam*).

And gifts to the poor. 'That means two gifts to two men', [one gift to each of the two. The minimum number of the plural אֶבְיָנִים 'poor' being two] (*Megillah 7a*).

Since everyone, rich and poor alike, had been rescued from mortal danger, Mordechai wanted to ensure that even the poor would have the means to make a feast on this holiday. He, therefore, ordained that alms be given so that all Jews everywhere – regardless of financial capabilities – would be able to celebrate Purim amidst joy (*D'r.a Pashra*).

No investigation should be made of applicants for such Purim money, rather it should be given to anyone who stretches out his hand.

Nor may Purim money be diverted to any other charitable purpose (*Rambam*).

It is preferable to spend more on gifts to the poor than on the Purim meal or on presents to friends. For no joy is greater or more glorious than the joy of gladdening the hearts of the poor, the orphans, the widows, the strangers (*Rambam*).

23. *קִבַּל הַיְּהוּדִים* – The verb *קִבַּל* – 'undertook' [lit. 'accept'] here is in singular form to indicate that all of Jewry united as one in undertaking to continue the celebration yearly (*M'nos Halevi*).

אֲשֶׁר-הֵחֵלוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת – *To continue the practice they had begun*, [lit. as they had spontaneously begun to do in the year of their deliverance].

אֲשֶׁר-כָּתַב מֶרְדֵּכַי – *As Mordechai had prescribed*. The Jews had undertaken to celebrate Purim annually. *מִשְׁלוח מְנוֹת*, *sending delicacies*, and *מִתְּנוֹת לְאֶבְיָנִים*, and gifts to the poor, however, were not part of the undertaking. They were instituted

for sending delicacies to one another, and gifts to the poor. ²³ The Jews undertook to continue the practice they had begun, just as Mordechai had prescribed to them.

²⁴ For Haman the son of Hammedasa, the Agagite, enemy of all the Jews, had plotted to destroy the Jews and had cast a pur (that is, the lot) to terrify and destroy them; ²⁵ but when she appeared before the King, he commanded by means of letters that the wicked scheme, which [Haman] had devised against the Jews, should recoil on his own head; and they hanged him and his sons on the gallows. ²⁶ That is why they called these days "Purim" from the word

by Mordechai and undertaken at his insistence (*M'nos Halevi*).

24. הָמָן ... צָרָר בְּלִי הַיְּהוּדִים — Haman ... the enemy of all the Jews. Mordechai wanted to make it manifestly clear that Haman's grudge was not a personal one against him. Like Agag, his ancestor, Haman was the enemy of all the Jews, man, woman, and child (*Alshich*).

Haman even exceeded Pharaoh in his cruelty, for Pharaoh's decree was directed only at the males; Haman's was against all the Jews (*Me'am Loez*).

וְהָפֵל פּוּר . . . לְהָמָם וּלְאַבְדָּם — And had cast a pur to terrify and destroy them. Haman had been quite confident that he would be able to destroy the Jews. He cast the lots only to determine the date that would be most auspicious for utterly obliterating them from the face of the earth (*Yosef Lekach, M'nos Halevi*).

25. וּבָבֹאָה לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ — But when she appeared. i.e. when Esther appeared before the King to beg for mercy (*Rashi*).

26. עַל-כֵּן קָרְאוּ — That is why they called. 'They' i.e. the Sanhedrin who lived in Mordechai's time (*Alshich*).

פּוּרִים — "Purim". Many reasons are offered for naming the holiday after the "pur." Among them:

Were it not for the Pur — which delayed Haman from carrying out his decree for eleven months, thus giving Mordechai the opportunity to pray and abolish the decree, Haman would have executed his scheme immediately, and he might have been able to accomplish his goal (*Me'am Loez*).

These days were called Purim, after the lots, as a reminder that the bad fortune which the stars had dictated for Jewry on those days was turned into good fortune (*Malbim*).

The throwing of lots represented

פֶּרֶק ט' כו
 כֹּזֶכַח יִקְבְּלוּ ק'
 דְּבָרֵי הָאֲגֵרָה הַזֹּאת וּמֵה־רָאוּ עַל־כֵּךָ
 וּמֵה הִגִּיעַ אֲלֵיהֶם: קִימוּ וְקִבְּלוּ הַיְּהוּדִים
 עֲלֵיהֶם | וְעַל־זֶרַעַם וְעַל כָּל־הַנִּלְוִים
 עֲלֵיהֶם וְלֹא יַעֲבֹר לַהֲיוֹת עֲשִׂים אֶת־
 שְׁנֵי הַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה בְּכַתְּבָם וּכְזִמְנָם בְּכָל־
 שָׁנָה וּשְׁנָה: כח וְהַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה נִזְכָּרִים
 וְנַעֲשִׂים בְּכָל־דֹּר וְדֹר מִשְׁפָּחָה
 וּמִשְׁפָּחָה מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה וְעִיר וְעִיר וַיָּמִי
 הַפּוֹרִים הָאֵלֶּה לֹא יַעֲבֹרוּ מִתּוֹךְ

only a minor happening in the entire perspective of events. According to the *Gaon Harav Moshe Feinstein* שליט"א, the message of the name "Purim" is that a person should never be over-joyous about his good fortunes. He should never feel so content, safe, and guaranteed in his position that he is no longer in need of praying to G-d or following His precepts. Rather, he must always regard himself as uncertain of his 'lot' and he should recognize the need to communicate to Hashem even after he has attained good fortune. This is evidenced by the fate of Haman: the 'lots' were on his side, but events turned out against him and in favor of the Jews (*Bastion of Faith*).

וּמֵה־רָאוּ — *what they had experienced* [lit. 'what they had seen; i.e. from personal experience, as much as Mordechai's decree, made them anxious to accept Purim as a permanent feast].

27. קִימוּ וְקִבְּלוּ הַיְּהוּדִים — *The Jews confirmed and undertook.*

The Talmud explains the verse: וַיִּתְּצֻבוּ בְּתַחֲתֵית הָהָר — *And they stood under the mount* [Exodus

19:17 — in reference to the Jews' receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai] 'Rav Avdimi ben Chama ben Chasa said: This teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, overturned the mountain over them like a cask, and said to them: "If you accept the Torah, it is well; if not, there shall be your grave." Rav Acha ben Jacob observed: This furnishes a strong protest against the Torah [i.e., this provides an excuse for non-observance, since the Torah was imposed by threat of death thus rendering its acceptance invalid.] Said Rava: Yet, even so, they re-accepted it in the days of Ahasuerus, for it is written: קִימוּ וְקִבְּלוּ they confirmed and undertook — i.e., they confirmed what they had undertaken long before' (*Shabbos 88a*).

The *S'fas Emes* pointed out that just as the first acceptance of the Torah followed a victorious war with Amalek, here, too, the war with Amalek's descendant, Haman was followed by a re-acceptance of the Torah (see introduction).

Now, [even though the *spelling* of וְקִבְּלוּ is in the singular, the pronunciation] קִימוּ וְקִבְּלוּ is in plural

"pur". Therefore, because of all that was written in this letter, and because of what they had experienced, and what had happened to them, ²⁷ the Jews confirmed and undertook upon themselves, and their posterity, and upon all who might join them, to observe these two days, without fail, in the manner prescribed, and at the proper time each year: ²⁸ Consequently, 'these days should be remembered and celebrated by every single generation, family, province, and city; and these days of Purim should never cease among the Jews, nor shall their

form to demonstrate that the Jews confirmed and undertook to celebrate the holiday upon themselves and their children [This is indicated by the contrast between this and the earlier reference to Jewish acceptance of Purim (verse 23) which is entirely in the singular.] (Yosef Lekach).

הַנִּלְוִים עֲלֵיהֶם — *Who might join them.* i.e. future גֵּרִים - proselytes. They, too, were indirectly affected by the decree of annihilation because Haman wanted to unroot the faith they would some day embrace (Vilna Gaon).

בְּכַתְּבָם — *in the manner prescribed* [lit. 'in accordance with their writing']. The Sages interpret this to include the law of reading the Megillah on the evening and morning of Purim and its various details (Megillah 19a).

בְּכָל שָׁנָה וְשָׁנָה — *each year.* [lit. 'each and every year']. According to the Talmud (Meg. 6b) in a leap year when there is a second Adar, Purim is observed in the second Adar. בְּכָל שָׁנָה וְשָׁנָה — 'each and every

year': Just as in most years Adar adjoins Nissan, so in a leap year, as well, Purim is celebrated in the Adar adjoining Nissan. 'But,' the Talmud asks, 'Adar also adjoins Shevat?' To which the answer given is: מִסְמַךְ גְּאוּלָּה לְגְאוּלָּה עֲדִיף, more weight is to be attached to bringing one period of redemption close to another [i.e. Purim to Passover].

28. נִזְכָּרִים — *Remembered.* By reading the Megillah (Rashi).

וְנִצְעָשִׁים — *And celebrated.* With feast, gladness, delicacies, and gifts (Rashi).

מִשְׁפָּחָהּ וּמִשְׁפָּחָה — *By every single family, who assemble to eat and drink together, thus undertaking that the days of Purim יַעֲבִדוּ — should never cease (Rashi).*

The verse specified *every single generation, family, province, and city*, to make clear that no one may claim that he resides in a country that didn't exist or where no Jews lived at the time of the miracle, and is, therefore, free from the obligation to observe Purim . . .

Rather, the days of Purim should

פֶּרֶק ט הַיְּהוּדִים וְחָרָם לֹא יִסּוּף מִזְרָעָם:
 כֹּט-לֹא כֹט וְתִכְתֹּב אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה בֶּת-אֲבִיחַיִל
 וּמִרְדֵּכַי הַיְּהוּדִי אֶת-כָּל-תִּקְוָה לְקַיָּם אֶת
 אֲגֻרַת הַפָּרִים הַזֹּאת הַשְּׁנִית: וַיִּשְׁלַח
 סְפָרִים אֶל-כָּל-הַיְּהוּדִים אֶל-שֶׁבַע
 וְעֶשְׂרִים וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה מְלָכוֹת
 לֹא אַחֲשׁוּרוֹשׁ דְּבָרֵי שְׁלוֹם וְאַמֶּת: לְקַיָּם

never cease from among the Jews and no one is exempt from its observance (*Ibn Ezra, M'nos Halevi*).

יִעֲבְרוּ — *Should never cease.* 'Even if all the festivals should be annulled, Purim will never be annulled' (*Midrash*).

The Talmud [taking the words יִעֲבְרוּ, *should not cease*, and לֹא יִסּוּף, *not perish*, as a prophetic promise rather than an injunction] quotes this verse as further proof that the Book of Esther was composed under the inspiration of רִיחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ — the holy spirit [for how else could the authors of the Megillah know that 'Purim will never cease from among the Jews?'] (*Megillah 7a*).

29. וְתִכְתֹּב — *Wrote.* The letter ת in this word is enlarged to indicate that just as the ת is the last letter of the alphabet, so is the story of Esther the end of all the miracles to be included in the Bible ([*Yoma 29a*]; *Me'am Loez*).

וְתִכְתֹּב אֶסְתֵּר — *Then Esther wrote.* Esther elaborated upon all that Mordechai had written earlier, making clear that the apparently natural events leading up to Haman's downfall and the Jewish salvation were but manifestations of the hand of G-d, and that they were brought

about by prayers, fasting, and supplication (*Alshich, Yosef Lekach*).

בֶּת-אֲבִיחַיִל — *Daughter of Avichail.* Having finally been able to reveal her identity as a Jewess after having had to conceal it for so long, Esther is proud to mention her father's name publicly (*Me'am Loez*).

אֶת-כָּל-תִּקְוָה — *With full authority.* [lit. 'all the power'].

According to *Rashi*, טוֹקְפוֹ שֶׁל נֶס — *all the power of the miracle:* of Ahasuerus, of Haman, of Mordechai and of Esther. [i.e. that each one of these were instrumental on the miracle].

'Hitherto they had not used Esther's authority, for they preferred that the people accept voluntarily the practice of Purim without the power of government to overawe them. But after the nation had voluntarily accepted Purim as an eternal practice, Esther and Mordechai supported it with the royal authority' (*Torah Nation*).

לְקַיָּם — *to ratify.* Once Esther and Mordechai were assured that the Jews had accepted Purim, they wrote this second letter with "all their authority to ensure that the Jews would never — even in later generations — abolish observance of this festival out of fear of their

IX

29-31

remembrance perish from their descendants.

²⁹ Then Queen Esther, daughter of Avichail, and Mordechai the Jew, wrote with full authority to ratify this second letter of Purim. ³⁰ Dispatches were sent to all the Jews, to the hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus — with words of peace and truth — ³¹ to establish these days

rulers, wherever they might be (M'nos Halevi)

The Megillah spans a history of nine years, from the third to the twelfth year of Ahasuerus' reign. A layman could never recognize that the Jews' refusal to obey Mordechai's plea not to attend Ahasuerus' feast would result in a dramatic, but seemingly unconnected, series of events over the next nine years.

The common people 'knew' that Haman's decree was caused by Mordechai's obstinate refusal to bow. They held him responsible for the mortal danger to the nation. Mordechai knew better. He knew that the decree was in punishment for the Jews' weakness in enjoying the forbidden feast. He knew that refusal to bow was the first step in a chain of courage and repentance that, alone, could save his people.

When he and Esther wrote the Megillah, he began the story with the feast of Ahasuerus because their participation was the cause of the evil decree, which, was annulled as a result of their sincere repentance — a full nine years later.

The Megillah teaches us that our leaders discern much more than we; ultimate salvation lies in submission to their authority (Rav Eliyahu Desler).

30. דְּבָרֵי שְׁלוֹם וְאֶמֶת — with words of peace and truth. According to the Talmud, the Torah is called 'Truth' and the Megillah is compared to it in its ritual requirements. 'This shows that the Megillah must be written with ruled lines, like the 'true essence' of the Torah (Meg. 16b).

Just as the Torah is open to interpretation [to uncover its deeper meaning — (Torah T'mimah)], so is the Megillah open to interpretation (Yerushalmi, Megillah 1:1)

Another meaning is: Esther began her letter to the 127 provinces with greetings of peace as one usually begins a letter (D'na Pashra).

At the same time she admonished the Jews to live a life of שְׁלוֹם וְאֶמֶת — peace and truth — and thus ensure the rebuilding of the Temple (Me'am Loez).

31. Mordechai and Esther realized that people might ask by what right they instituted a new festival and made it binding on all future generations without direct Biblical precedent. Esther and Mordechai tell us in this verse that it was their aim that Purim be accepted by future generations 'just as they undertook upon themselves and their posterity the matter of

פֶּרֶק ט
 אֶת־יְמֵי הַפָּרִים הָאֵלֶּה בְּזִמְנֵיהֶם
 כְּאֲשֶׁר קִים עֲלֵיהֶם מֶרְדֵּכִי הַיְּהוּדִי
 וְאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה וְכֹאֲשֶׁר קִיְמוּ עַל־נַפְשָׁם
 וְעַל־זִרְעָם דְּבָרֵי הַצּוּמֹת וְנִעְקָתָם:
 וּמֵאֲמָר אֶסְתֵּר קִים דְּבָרֵי הַפָּרִים הָאֵלֶּה
 וְנִכְתָּב בְּסֵפֶר:

פֶּרֶק י א
 וַיִּשֶׂם הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ מֶסַע עַל־הָאָרֶץ
 וְאֵי הַיָּם: וְכָל־מַעֲשֵׂה תִקְפוֹ וּגְבוּרָתוֹ
 וּפְרָשֶׁת גְּדֻלַּת מֶרְדֵּכִי אֲשֶׁר גָּדְלוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ
 הָלוֹא־הֵם כְּתוּבִים עַל־סֵפֶר דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים
 לַמַּלְכִי מְדִי וּפָרָס: כִּי מֶרְדֵּכִי הַיְּהוּדִי
 מִשָּׁנָה לַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ וְגִדּוּל לַיְּהוּדִים

fasts and their lamentations, i.e., just as the Jews undertook to observe the four fasts instituted by the Prophets (Tenth of Teves, Seventeenth of Tammuz, Ninth of Av, and the Fast of Gedaliah) — even though there is no direct Torah authority for their imposition. In a like manner, should the Jews undertake the celebration of Purim for themselves and their

children (M'nos Halevi).

32. — *Esther's ordinance validated.* Esther requested from the Sages of her time to commemorate her [lit. 'fix' her] and to include this book among the other [sacred] Writings. This is the meaning of *וְנִכְתָּב בְּסֵפֶר*, and it was recorded in the book (Rashi) [See introduction].

X

1. וַיִּשֶׂם...מֶסַע — *Levied taxes.* [This verse tells us that with the salvation of the Jews, affairs of state returned to normal. Under Mordechai, the empire grew stronger.]

'These words, inserted to accord honor to the Persian government, were necessary to demonstrate that the Megillah does not deal solely with the triumph of the Jews. This

IX
32 of Purim on their proper dates just as Mordechai the Jew and Queen Esther had enjoined them, and as they had undertook upon themselves and their posterity the matter of the fasts and their lamentations. ³² Esther's ordinance validated these regulations for Purim; and it was recorded in the book.

X
1-3 ¹King Ahasuerus levied taxes on both the mainland and the islands. ² All his mighty and powerful acts, and a full account of the greatness of Mordechai, whom the King had promoted, are recorded in the book of chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia. ³ For Mordechai the Jew was viceroy to King Ahasuerus; he was a great man

demonstrates clearly that the Megillah was completed in the early days of the Great Assembly, when Persia was still powerful and all the Jews were still its subjects. (Thus is demolished the fantasy of the "Bible-critics" that the book of Esther was composed in the time of the Hasmoneans, long after the Persians had lost their power to the Greeks) (Torah Nation).

מס ... ואיני הים — taxes ... the islands. This verse supports the Midrashic statement that Ahasuerus' 127 provinces consisted of 100 provinces on the mainland, and 27 on islands. The Vilna Gaon ingeniously points out that the גימטריא — numerical value of מס,

taxes (which were imposed on the mainland), is 100; the numerical value of ואיני (the islands) is 27!

2. גדלת מרדכי — The greatness of Mordechai: It was made clear that Ahasuerus' newly gained stature was the result of Mordechai's service to him (Ibn Ezra)

3. לרב אחיו — With the multitude of his brethren. [lit. 'with the majority of his brethren']. It is impossible for someone to achieve universal acceptance because of jealousy and rivalry (Ibn Ezra).

The Talmud states: 'Of the majority of his brethren, but not all of his brethren; this informs us that

פרק י' וְרָצוּי לָרֹב אֶתְיוּ דִּרְשׁ טוֹב לַעֲמֹ וְדַבֵּר שְׁלוֹם לְכָל-זֶרְעוֹ:

some members of Sanhedrin parted from him [because, having become close to the government, he neglected his study of Torah, — (Rashi)] (*Megillah 16b*).

דִּרְשׁ טוֹב לַעֲמֹ — *He sought the good*

of his people. He did not wait until asked; he actively sought opportunities to do good (*Ibn Ezra*).

He appropriated the monies he took from Haman's house toward the eventual re-construction of the Temple (*Midrash Lekach Tov*).

X *among the Jews, and popular with the multitude of his brethren; he sought the good of his people and was concerned for the welfare of all his posterity.*

וְדָבָר שְׁלוֹם לְכָל-דּוֹרָיו — *And was concerned for the welfare of all his posterity.* [lit. 'Speaking peace to all his seed']. Thus, with the blessing of peace, and a picture of the stature and security of the Jews under Mordechai, the Megillah closes.

תם ונשלם שבח לאל בורא עולם

Bibliography of Authorities Cited in the Commentary

Italics are used to denote the name of a work. Bold Italics within the biography indicate the specific book of that particular author cited in the commentary.

An asterisk (*) precedes the names of contemporary figures

Abba Gorion:

See *Midrash Abba Gorion*

Abudarham, David ben Joseph:

[also pronounced 'Abudraham.]

Born in Seville, Spain in 1340. According to some, he was a student of R. Yaakov ben Asher, author of the *Turim*. Author of *Sefer Abudarham*, a collection of Halachos based on the order of prayers in the *Siddur*. He commented on the prayers in great detail and traced the variations in customs of different countries. The book was first published in 1490, and is quoted many times in the *Shulchan Aruch*.

Akedas Yitzchak:

See Arama, Rav Yitzchak b. Moshe.

Alkabetz, Rav Shlomo Halevi:

[b. 1505-Salonica; d. 1576 Safed]

One of the greatest Kaballists and mystical poets of his day. Author of the Piyyut '*L'cha Dodi*' recited every Friday evening. He was a contemporary and friend of Rav Yosef Karo, author of *Shulchan Aruch*.

Rav Shlomo sent his father-in-law his commentary on Megillas Esther, *M'nos Halevi*, which he had finished that year, in lieu of 'Mishloach Manos.' They received the gift warmly and treasured it 'more than they would gifts of silver and gold.'

In his Piyyut, '*L'cha Dodi*,' he speaks of the sufferings of the Jewish people and their aspirations for Redemption. Probably no other Piyyut has reached the popularity of '*L'cha Dodi*;' it is recited every Friday by all Jewish congregations throughout the world.

Alshich, Rav Moshe:

[Also spelled Alshekh]

Rav, Posek, and Bible Commentator. Born in Andriopol in 1508, studied Torah there in Yeshiva of Rav Yosef Karo. Settled in Safed where he spent most of his life and was ordained there by Rav Karo with the full Semichah re-introduced by Rav Yaakov Berav. Died while travelling in Damascus in 1600

He wrote Commentaries on most of the Bible. His *Mas'as Moshe* on Esther was published by his son in 1601.

Alter, Rav Yehudah Leib:

(1847-1905)

Gerrer Rebbe; son of Rav Avraham Mordechai, the eldest son the '*Chidushei HaRim*'. He was orphaned as a child and was brought up and educated largely by his grandfather. In 1870, after the death of Rav Henach of Alexandrow, he became Rebbe of Ger.

The Rebbe devoted much energy promoting Torah study and attracted many youths. His writings are collected under the title *S'fas Emes*, by which name he is also known.

Alter, Rav Yitzchak Meir:

(1789-1866)

Gerrer Rebbe; founder of the Gerrer Chassidic dynasty. Rav Yitzchak Meir was a disciple of the Maggid of Koznitz, and later of Rav Simcha Bunem of Pshyscha, and of Rav Menachem Mendel of Kotzk.

After the Kotzker's death in 1859, Rav Yitzchak Meir was acknowledged Rebbe by the majority of Kotzk Chassidim.

His influence was far-reaching. Although his leadership lasted only seven years, he had a formative influence on the development of Chassidus in Poland. Gerrer Chassidus became a powerful element in Orthodox Polish Jewry.

He wrote *Chiddushei haRim*, novellae on the Talmud and *Shulchan Aruch*, and was frequently referred to by the name of his work, "The Chiddushei haRim."

Arama, R. Meir b. Yitzchak:

[1460?-c.1545] Spanish Rabbi, born in Saragossa. Expelled from Spain by inquisition in 1492. Moved to Naples and in 1495 settled and became Rabbi in Salonica. Wrote a commentary to *Esther* falsely attributed to his father, Rav Yitzchak, author of *Akedas Yitzchak*, and which appears in almost all editions of that book.

Arama, Rav Yitzchak b. Moshe:

[1420-1494] Spanish Rav, philosopher and preacher. He was Rav of Calatayud where he wrote most of his works. After expulsion of Jews from Spain, in 1492, he settled in Naples, where he died.

He is best known for his book *Akedas Yitzchak*, a collection of allegorical commentaries on the Torah. First published in 1522, it has been reprinted many times and has exercised great influence on Jewish thought.

It should be noted that the commentary to *Megillas Esther*, extant in all editions of *Akedas Yitzchak* since Venice, 1573, is actually the work of his son, Meir. [See above.]

Yitzchak's own **Commentary on Esther** was published in Constantinople, 1518.

Ashkenazy, Rav Eliezer b. Eiyahu Harofe:

Born 1513 (?). Died 1586 in Cracow. Considered one of the leaders of his generation. He was a student of Rav Yosef Caro, author of *Shulchan Aruch*, and a close friend of Rav Moshe

Alshich. For 22 years he was the Torah leader in Egypt, and was greatly known for his piety and learning.

His first work, *Yosef Lekach* on *Megillas Esther* was published in 1566 and brought him much praise from his contemporaries. He wrote *Maasei Hashem* on the deeper meanings of the stories in the Torah, and wrote many Responsa, his answers to Halachic query having been accepted as authoritative.

Attar, Rav Chaim b. Moshe, Ibn:

(1696-1763)

Rav and Kabbalist. Born in Morocco, moved to Leghorn en route to Israel. In 1741, he reached Israel and established a Yeshivah in Jerusalem, 'Midrash Knesses Israel Yeshivah.' Rav Chaim ibn Attar died a year after settling in Jerusalem.

His best known and most important work is the *Or Hachaim*, his commentary on the Torah, often published in most large editions of the Bible.

Rav Avraham Ibn Ezra:

(Born 1089 in Toledo; died 1164).

Famous poet, philosopher, grammarian, scientist, astronomer, — and above all — Biblical commentator. He also wrote a commentary on the *Megillos* — including *Esther*. In all his Bible commentaries he strived for the plain, literal meaning of the verse. His aim was to explain the etymology of difficult words within their grammatical context. Next to Rashi, his commentary on the Torah is most widely studied, and appears in almost all large editions of the Bible.

In France, he met Rav Yaakov Tam ['Rabbeinu Tam' — grandson of Rashi] and a deep friendship between the two followed.

According to some, he married the daughter of Rav Yehudah Halevi, and had five sons.

Legend has it that he once met the Rambam (Maimonides) and dedicated a poem to him that he wrote on the day of his death.

Azulai, Rav Chaim Yosef David:

Known by his Hebrew acronym CHIDA. Born in Jerusalem in 1724; died in Leghorn in 1806. Halachist, Kabbalist, and bibliographer/historian, he possessed great intellectual powers and many-faceted talents.

He went abroad as an emissary and he would send large sums of money back to Israel. He ended his mission in 1778 in Leghorn where he spent the rest of his life.

His fame as a halachist rest on his glosses to *Shulchan Aruch*, contained in his *Birkei Yosef*, a work constantly quoted by later authorities.

He was the author of the famous bibliographic work *Shem-Hagedolim*. Among his many works was the homiletic *Nachal Eshkol*.

Rav Bachya ben Asher:

(also pronounced B'chayai):

(Lived in Saragossa, Spain, mid 13th century.) He was one of the foremost students of R. Shlomo ben Aderes (*Rashba*). His most famous work was his commentary on the Torah written in 1291. His *Kad Hakemach* on the foundations of faith had wide circulation. Among his many other works was a commentary on the Book of Esther based on the interpretation of the Ibn Ezra "who wrote the most accurate commentary of all on the Megillah. He died in 1340.

Bastion of Faith:

by Rav Avraham Fishelis. (See Feinstein, Rav Moshe.)

Belzer Rebbe:

See — Rokeach, Rav Aharon.

Chidushei HaRim:

See Alter, Rav Yitzchak Meir.

Chortkover, Rebbe:

See Friedmann, Rav Shlomo.

Chullin:

Talmudic tractate in Seder Kodashim.

Dessler, Rav Elyahu Eliezer:

(1891-1954)

One of the outstanding personalities of the Mussar movement. He was born in Homel, Russia.

In 1929 he settled in London and became the Rav of several synagogues. He exercised a profound influence on the teaching of Mussar, not only because of the profundity of his ideas, but also on account of his personal, ethical conduct.

In 1941 he became director of the Kollel of Gateshead Yeshiva in London.

In 1947, at the invitation of Rav Yosef Kahaneman, he became Mashgiach of Ponovez Yeshiva in Bnei Brak, Israel, and there he remained until his death.

His teachings reflect a harmonious mixture of Mussar, Kaballah, and Chassidus. Some of his ideas were published by his pupils in *Michtav Me-Elyahu* (3 vols. 1955-64).

D'na Pashra:

See Rav Elyahu Shlomo Avraham haKohen.

Edels, Rav Shmuel Eliezer b. Yehudah haLevi

(Known as MaHaRSHA — Moreinu Ha Rav Shmuel Eliezer.)

1555-1631. One of the foremost Talmud commentators, whose commentary is included in almost every edition of Talmud.

Born in Cracow, he moved to Posen in his youth. In 1614 he became Rav of Lublin and in 1625 of Ostrog, where he founded a large Yeshivah.

Rav Eleazar b. Yehudah of Worms:

[Heb. Eleazar of Germeiza]. Also known as *Baal HaRokeach*. 1160-1237.

Scholar in the fields of Halachah, Kaballah, and Paytan in medieval Germany. Student of Rav Yehudah haChassid the author of *Sefer Chasidim*.

Rav Eleazar is known primarily for his halachic work *Sefer Rokeach*. His stu-

dents were many, among them Rav Yitzchak of Vienna, author of *Or Zarua*. Among his exegetical works are *Shaarei Binah*.

Rav Eliyahu Shlomo Avraham haKohen:

(d. 1729)

Born in Smyrna, he spent most of his life there as *Dayyan* and *Rav*.

His most famous works are *Shevet Musar* on ethics and homiletics; *Midrash haItamari*, a homiletical work on ethical subjects. Because of this work, he became known as Rav Eliyahu haItamari. He also wrote *Midrash T. Ipiot*, novellae on various subjects arranged alphabetically; and *D'na Pashra* [abbreviated: *Perush SHir Hashirim*, Ruth Esther] commentary on three *Megillos* — *Song of Songs*, *Ruth*, and *Esther*.

Rav Eliyahu ben Shlomo Zalman of Vilna:

Also known as the "Vilna Gaon;" acronym haGRA = haGaon Rav Eliyahu. Born, 1st day of Passover 1720; died 3rd day of Chol Hamoad Sukkos 1797.

One of the greatest spiritual leaders of Jewry in modern times. A child prodigy and man of phenomenal genius, his knowledge of every facet of Torah learning was without equal. His glosses and commentaries encompassed nearly every one of the important classical writings.

Epstein, Rav Baruch haLevi:

(1860-1940). Born in Bobruisk, Russia. received early education from his father, Rav Yechiel Michel Epstein, author of *Aruch haShulchan*. Rav Baruch later studied under his uncle, Rav Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin [the 'Netziv']. He is best known for his brilliant commentary *Torah Temimah*.

Eshkol Hakofer:

See Sava, Rav Avraham b. Yaakov.

Even Shoham:

Commentary on *Megillah* by Rav Shlomo Chanoch Henoch.

Eybeschuetz, Rav Yonasan

b. Naman Nata:

Rav, and one of the greatest Torah scholars of his generation.

Born in 1690 in Cracow, served as Rosh Yeshiva in Prague. Served as Rav of the "Three Communities" — Altona, Hamburg, and Wandsbek until his death in 1796. Published extensively on Halachah and Bible. His most famous Halachic works were *Urim U'Tummim* on Choshen Mishpat (1775), and *K'resi Upleisi* on Yoreh Deah. His homiletic work, *Ya'aros D'vash*, published posthumously, was reprinted many times.

***Feinstein, Rav Moshe:**

Contemporary Posek, and Rosh Yeshiva, Harav Feinstein is considered by many to be the *Gadol Hador* — Torah leader of this generation.

Born in Russia in 1895, Harav Feinstein was known as a child prodigy. He came to America in 1937 and became Dean of Mesivtha Tifereth Jerusalem in New York's lower East side. Harav Feinstein responds to Halachic inquiries from around the world daily. Author of 'Igrose Moshe' — 5 volumes of his Halachic responsa; and an ongoing series of *Dibrose Moshe* — his novellae on Talmud.

Some of Rabbi Feinstein's homiletic lectures were collected and published by Rabbi Avraham Fishelis in *Kol Ram* (Hebrew; 2 vols.) and *Bastion of Faith* (English).

Friedmann, Rav Shlomo:

(1894-1959) Chortkover Rebbe, of the illustrious Rzhiner dynasty. Resided in Israel. Member of Agudath Israel's Moetzes Gedolei Torah [Council of Rabbinic Sages]; Son of Rav Nachum Mordechai (1854-1934); author of *Tiferes Yisrael*.

Galico, Rav Elsha ben Gavriel:

Prominent Talmudist and Kabalist of the early 16th Century. Member of Rabbinical Court of Rav Yosef Karo in Safed.

Rav Galico's Halachic responsa are quoted in *Knesses Hagedolah*. His famous *Commentary on Megillas Esther* was published in Venice in 1582, the year of his death.

GRA:

See Eliyahu (ben Shlomo Zalman) of Vilna.

Hirsch, Rav Shamshon Raphael:

(1808-1888). The father of modern German Orthodoxy, he was a fiery leader, brilliant writer, and profound educator. His greatness as a Talmudic scholar was obscured by his other monumental accomplishments. After becoming Chief Rabbi and member of Parliament in Austria, he left to revitalize Torah Judaism in Frankfurt-am-Main. He transformed it into Torah bastion. His best known works are the classic six-volume commentary on *Chumash*, and *Horeb*, a philosophical analysis of the mitzvos.

Ibn Ezra:

See Rav Avraham Ibn Ezra.

Imrei Moshe:

By Rav Moshe Rapaort.

Isserles, Rav Moshe:

(Known as RaMA).

(c. 1525-1572) Polish Rav and codifier, one of the great Halachic authorities. His contemporaries considered him to be "The Rambam of Polish Jewry," and he can be compared to the Rambam in many ways.

When Rav Yosef Caro published his *Bais Yoseph* on the *Tur*, Rav Moshe Isserles simultaneously had written his *Darkei Moshe* which he later condensed. He utilized the *Darkei Moshe* as a basis for his glosses on Rav Yosef Caro's *Shulchan Aruch*. Published as *'Hagahos'* or *'ha-Mappah'*, it contained the custom of the Ashkenazi scholars ignored by the *Shulchan Aruch*. By spreading his *Mappah* ('Tablecloth'), so to speak, over the *Shulchan Aruch* ('Prepared Table') — which had codified Sephardic prac-

tice — Rav Moshe Isserles, in fact, made that work acceptable to Ashkenazim as well as Sephardim.

Generally, the rulings of Rav Moshe Isserles were accepted as binding on Ashkenazi Jewry.

Jaffe, Rav Mordechai:

(1535-1612). Talmudist, Kabbalist. Born in Prague, he was sent as a little boy to study under Rav Shlomo Luna (Ra-SHaL) and Rav Moshe Isserles (RaMA). Became Rosh Yeshivah in Prague in 1533.

When Rav Yosef Caro's *Beis Yosef* appeared, Rav Mordechai found it overlong, and so began to write his "*Levush Malchus*." Later, the *Shulchan Aruch* appeared with the gloss of Rav Moshe Isserles, and Rav Mordechai put aside his work only to re-consider many years later. He published his work — *The Levushim* encompassing all of *Shulchan Aruch*, as well as a commentary on Maimonides, Rashi, astronomy — "as a work that will be midway between the two extremes: the lengthy *Beis Yosef* of Rav Caro on the one hand, and on the other, Caro's *Shulchan Aruch* together with the *Mappah* of Rav Isserles, which is too brief."

Kad Hakemach:

See Rabbenu Bachya b. Asher.

***Kitov, Rav Eliyahu:**

Contemporary Israeli scholar, and author. Famous for his *Ish Ubeiso*, ("*The Jew and His Home*"), *Sefer HaTodaah* ("*The Book of Seasons*"), both translated into English by Rav Nathan Bulman; and his ongoing series of *Sefer haParshiot* on the Five Books of the Bible.

Kol Bo:

Early work on Halacha. Quoted as authoritative by all later authorities and by *Shulchan Aruch*. Authorship uncertain.

Kol Rinah:

Commentary on *Megillas Esther* by Rav Moshe Chai Milul.

Lekach Tov:

See *Midrash Lekach Tov*.

Levush:

See Jaffe, Rav Mordechai.

Lorberbaum, Rav Yaakov b.**Yaakov Moshe of Lissa:**

(1760-1832). Polish Rav and Halachist. His father died before he was born. In 1809, he became Rav of Lissa, a long-time Torah-center in Poland. Together with Rav Akiva Eger and the Chassam Sofer, he vehemently opposed and attacked the *Maskilim* and reformers. After he published his *Chavas Da'as* on *Yosh De'ah*, he was acknowledged as an outstanding *Posek*. Among his writings were *Imre Yosher*, a comprehensive commentary on the Five Megillos, each published at a different place and time, the commentary on *Megillas Esther*, being called *Megillas Sesarim*, printed in large editions of the Bible.

Ma'amar Mordechai:

Commentary by Rav Shem Tov b. Yaakov Melamed. Mid. 16th Century.

Maharsha:

See Eidels, Rav Shmuel Eliezer b. Yehudah haLevi.

Maimonides:

See Rambam.

Malbim, Rav Meir Leibush:

(1809-1879). Rav, preacher, and Biblical commentator.

The name Malbim is an acronym of "Meir Leibush ben Yechiel Michel." The Malbim was also known as the 'illui [prodigy] from Volhynia.' He was Rav in several cities, but he suffered much persecution because of his uncompromising stand against Reform which led to his short-term imprisonment on a false accusation. He wandered much of his life, serving as Rav in various cities for several years at a time.

His fame and immense popularity rest

upon his widely esteemed commentary on the Bible. His first published commentary was on *Megillas Esther* (1845). His commentaries on the remaining Books of the Bible were published between then and 1876.

Me'am Loez:

An 18th-Century homiletical Bible commentary in Ladino. The outstanding work of Judeo-Spanish literature. A commentary of an encyclopaedic nature begun by Rav Yaakov Culi (1685-1732) of whom the Chidah in *Shem Hagedolim* speaks in the most superlative of adjectives. No work designed to instruct the Jewish masses ever proved so popular. Rav Yaakov Culi died in 1732 with only *Breishis* having been published. He left many unfinished manuscripts, and his work was continued by others.

The all-encompassing Volume on *Megillas Esther* was edited by Rav Rafael Chiyah Pontremoli (1864).

A Hebrew translation of the entire work, entitled *Yalkot Me'am Loez*, was undertaken by Rav Shmuel Yerushalmi beginning in 1967. *Esther* was published, with additional commentaries, in 1974.

Megillah:

[As differentiated from 'Megillas Esther' — the Biblical Book of Esther.]

Talmudic tractate in Seder Moed.

Megillas Sesarim:

See Lorberbaum, Rav Yaakov b. Yaakov Moshe of Lissa.

Mesoras Habris:

See Posner, Rav David Tevele.

Michtav Me'Eliyahu:

See Dessler, Rav Eliyahu Eliezer.

Midrash:

See *Midrash Rabbah*.

Midrash Abba Gorion:

One of the 'smaller' early Midrashim on *Megillas Esther*. It begins with a statement of the Talmudic Sage Abba Gorion of Sidon, hence the name *Abba*

Gorion. This Midrash is quoted by Rashi, and is quoted extensively by the *Yalkut Shim'oni*.

Included — in incomplete form — by Yellinek in his *Beis HaMidrash* and reprinted in enlarged form by Buber in his *Sifrei D'Agad'ta al Megillas Esther*.

Midrash Lekach Tov:

A "small" early Midrash on *Megillas Esther* — very often referred to by Rav Shlomo Alkabetz in his *M'nos Halevi*. Published by Buber in his *Sifrei D'Agad'ta al Megillas Esther*.

Midrash Panim Acherim L'Esther:

One of the early "Smaller" Midrashim. Existing in two versions: *Nussach Aleph* and *Nussach Bais*. Quoted extensively by Rav Shlomo Alkabetz in his *M'nos Halevi*.

Published by Buber from a manuscript in the *Sifrei D'Agad'ta al Megillas Esther*.

Midrash Rabbah:

[Lit. 'The Great Midrash'] Denoting the oldest Amoraic, classical Midrashim. (Throughout the commentary of this work whenever 'Midrash' alone is quoted, the reference is to *Midrash Esther Rabbah*.)

***Miller, Rav Avigdor:**

Contemporary Rav, noted lecturer and author. A dominant force on the American Yeshivah scene. Rav in Brooklyn. Author of *Rejoice O Youth! Sing You Righteous; Torah Nation; Behold a People*.

M'nos Halevi:

(Also called: *Midrash Megillas Esther*). See Alkabetz, Rav Shlomo Halevi

Mishneh Brurah:

See Rav Yisrael Meir haKohen.

Nachal Eshkol:

See Azulai, Rav Chaim Yosef David.

Or Hachaim:

See Attar, Rav Chaim b. Moshe, ibn.

Panim Acherim:

See Midrash Panim Acherim.

Pirchei L'vanon:

Commentary. Quoted in the recently published anthology '*Yaynah Shel Torah*' (Jerusalem, 1954).

Pirke Avos:

"Chapters" or "Ethics" of the Fathers. A Talmudic tractate in *Seder Nezikin*. Read in the synagogue Shabbos afternoon from Passover to Rosh Hashanah.

Posner, Rav David Tevele:

Rav and author, mid 17th Century. Born in Posen. A disciple of Rav Sheftel Horowitz.

He wrote *Shaarei Zion* — on Mussar, and *Mesoras Habris*, both published posthumously by his son. He died in 1690 near Altona.

Rabinowitz, Rav Shlomo haKohen of Radomsk:

(1803-1866).

Radomsker Rebbe. A follower of the Apta Rebbe after the death of the 'Chozeh' [The 'Seer'] of Lublin. In 1843 he became Rebbe of Radomsk. He attracted many Chassidim. He is known for his classical work, *Tiferes Shlomo*.

Rambam:

Acronym for Rav Moshe ben Maimon; Maimonides. (1135-1204).

One of the most illustrious figures in Judaism in the post-Talmudic era, and probably one of the greatest of all time. He was a rabbinic authority, codifier, philosopher, and royal physician. According to some, he was a descendant of Rav Yahuda HaNasi.

Born in Cordoba; moved to Israel and then to Fostat, the old city of Cairo, Egypt.

At the age of 23 he began his commentary on the Mishnah which he authored throughout his wanderings. His main work was *Mishneh-Torah*, *Yad ha-Chazaka*, his codification of the

spectrum of halachah until his day. This was the only book he wrote in Hebrew. All his other works were written in Arabic, a fact he regretted later in life. He is also known for his 'Guide to the Perplexed,' and for his many works in the field of medicine, hygiene, astronomy, etc. Truly it may be said 'from Moshe to Moshe there are none like Moshe.'

Rashi:

See Rav Shlomo b. Yitzchak.

RaMA:

See Isserles, Rav Moshe.

Rokeach, Rav Aharon:

(1880-1957)

Belzer Rebbe. Successor to his father, Rav Yissachar Dov, and Rebbe of one of the most important Chassidic dynasties of Galicia. After confinement in many ghettos in Europe during World War II, he was deported to Kashau and subsequently to Budapest. In 1944 he managed to reach Israel where he resided until his death. Universally considered one of the great and holy tzadikim of the last generation.

Sava, Rav Avraham b. Yaakov:

Kabbalist and Preacher. Rav Avraham was among those expelled from Spain in 1492. He wrote many books, among them his commentary on the Five Megillos, *Eshkol haKofer*.

Seder Hadoros:

See Heilprin, Rav Yechiel b. Shlomo.

Seder Olam:

Early Midrashic-chronological work. *Seder Olam* is mentioned in the Talmud (Shab. 88a; Yev. 82b, et al.) and is ascribed to the Tanna Rav Yose ben Chalafta.

Sefas Emes:

See Alter, Rav Yehudah Aryah Leib.

Sefer HaTodaah:

See Kitov, Rav Eliyahu.

Shaar Bas Rabim:

Quoted in the recently published anonymous anthology 'Yaynah Shel Torah' (Jerusalem, 1964).

Shaarei Binah:

See Rav Eleazar ben Judah of Worms.

Rav Shlomo ben Yitzchok (Rashi):

Leading commentator on the Bible and Talmud. He was born in Troyes, France in 1040 — the year in which Rabbeinu Gershom M'or HaGolah died. According to tradition, Rashi's ancestry goes back to Rav Yochanan haSandlar and to King David.

The summit of Rashi's commentaries was his commentary on the Talmud — an encyclopaedic and brilliant undertaking. Nothing can be compared to the impact this commentary has had upon all who study the Talmud. Rashi's commentary has opened to all what otherwise would have been a sealed book. Without his commentary, no one would dare navigate the 'Sea of Talmud.' Every word is precise and laden with inner meaning. Rashi's corrections of the Talmud text were, for the most part, introduced into the standard editions and became the accepted text.

Rashi's *Commentary to the Bible*, too, made a similar impact — and virtually every Bible printed contains his commentary which is distinguished by its conciseness and clarity.

Many Halachic works from 'the School of Rashi' have come down to us: *Sefer Ha'orah*; *Sefer HaPardes*; *Machzor Vitry*; *Siddur Rashi*; and responsa.

He died on Tammuz 29, 1105. His burial place is not known.

*** Singer, Rav Yehudah David:**

Contemporary Rav and Author. Rav of Givat Shmuel, Israel. Author of *Ziv Hamitzvos* ['Splendor of the Commandments']; and *Ziv Haminhagim* ['Splendor of the Customs'], arranged according to the Hebrew calendar; and *Ziv Hashabbos* ['Splendor of the Sabbath']; Israel, 1971.

Shabbos:

Talmudic tractate in *Seder Moed*.

Targum:

(Lit. 'Translation')

The ancient Aramaic translation of the Bible. Usually referring to the *Targum Onkelos*.

Targum Sheni:

(Lit. 'Second Translation')

An ancient, and extensive collection of homilies in Aramaic on *Megillas Esther*. The early Gaonim refer to it.

Teitelbaum, Rav Moshe:

(1759-1841). Founder of the Sigheter dynasty. A pupil of the Chozeh of Lublin. A renowned Tzaddik, he was among the first to spread Chassidus in the Northern and Central districts of Hungary in his capacity as Rav of Vjhely. Author of *Yismach Moshe*, considered one of the classic works of Chassidus.

Tiferes Shlomo:

See Rabinowitz, Rav Shlomo haKohen, of Radomsk.

Torah Nation:

See Miller, Rav Avigdor.

Torah T'mimah:

See Epstein, Rav Baruch haLevi.

Tosafos:

[Literally, 'additions'.] Collective term for the leading Talmudic scholars of France and Germany during the twelfth century. There were up to 200 of them. They compiled *novellae on the Talmud* which became the companion to Rashi as the standard commentary to the Talmud. Basing their work on Rashi, they broadened and deepened his interpretations.

Valerio, Rav Shmuel ben Yehudah:

Rav, physician and author who lived in Greece in the second half of the sixteenth century. He wrote *Yad-Hamelech* on *Megillas Esther*, published in Corfu in 1579.

Vilna Gaon:

See Rav Eliyahu ben Shlomo Zalman of Vilna.

Yaaros Devash:

See Eybeschuetz, Rav Yonasan ben Nassan Nata.

Yad Hamelech:

See Valerio, Rav Shmuel ben Yehudah.

Yalkut Shimoni:

The early classical anthology of Midrashim. Authorship uncertain.

Yismach Moshe:

See Teitlebaum, Rav Moshe.

Rav Yisrael Meir haKohen:

(1838-1933)

"Chafetz Chaim"

One of the greatest Tzadikim in modern Judaism. He became universally known as 'The Chafetz Chaim,' after the title of his first work which he published anonymously at the age of 35. He established the Radun Yeshivah.

Author of many works, he is best known for his *Mishneh B'rurah* (6 vols., 1894-1907), a comprehensive commentary on *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chayim*, which has become the indispensable commentary used in studying the *Shulchan Aruch*.

He was a founder of Agudath Israel. He constantly stressed the fundamental belief in the *imminent* arrival of Mashiach, and, as a *Kohen*, he emphasized the study of the law of sacrifice and Temple worship and other related subjects.

His saintliness exercised a tremendous influence on all who knew him, and is the subject of many stories, all rich in morals, about him.

Yoma:

Talmudic tractate in *Seder Moed*.

Yosef Lekach:

See Rav Eliezer b. Eliyahu Ashkenazy Harofe.

Yismach Moshe:

See Teitelbaum, Rav Moshe.

Ziv Haminhagim:

See Singer, Rav Yehudah David.

סֵדֶר לַיִל פּוּרִים

Purim Evening Service

והוא רחום וכפר עון ולא ישחית, והרבה להשיב אפו ולא יעיר כל
חמתו, וי הושיעה המלך יעגנו ביום קראנו.

The חזון:

בָּרְכוּ אֶת יי המְבָרֵךְ.

Congregation and חזון

ברוך יי המְבָרֵךְ לעולם ועד.

ברוך אתה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר בָּרַכְנוּ מַעְרִיב
עֲרֵבִים בְּחֻמָּה פוֹתַח שַׁעֲרִים וּבִתְבוּנָה מְשֻׁנָּה עֲתִים וּמַחְלִיף
אֶת הַזְּמָנִים וּמְסַדֵּר אֶת־הַכּוֹכָבִים בְּמִשְׁמְרוֹתֵיהֶם בְּרַקִּיעַ
בְּרָצוֹנוֹ בּוֹרֵא יוֹם וְלַיְלָה גּוֹלָל אוֹר מִפְּנֵי־חֹשֶׁךְ וְחֹשֶׁךְ מִפְּנֵי־
אוֹר וּמַעְבִּיר יוֹם וּמַבְיֵא לַיְלָה וּמַבְדִּיל בֵּין יוֹם וּבֵין לַיְלָה יי
צָבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ אֵל חַי וְקַיִם תָּמִיד וְיִמְלֹךְ עָלֵינוּ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. בָּרוּךְ
אתה יי הַמַּעְרִיב עֲרֵבִים.

אֶהְבֵּת עוֹלָם בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל עִמָּךְ אֶהְבֵּת, תוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת חֻקִּים
וּמִשְׁפָּטִים אוֹתָנוּ לְמִדָּת. עַל כֵּן יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּשִׁכְבָּנוּ וּבְקוּמָנוּ
נִשְׁחִי בְּחֻקֶּיךָ וְנִשְׁמַח בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָתְךָ וּבְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. כִּי
הֵם חַיֵּינוּ וְאֶרֶץ יְמִינוּ וּבָהֶם נִהְיָה יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה וְאֶהְבֵּתְךָ אֵל
תָּסִיר מִמָּנוּ לְעוֹלָמִים. בָּרוּךְ אתה יי אוֹהֵב עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

When praying in private, add:

אֵל מֶלֶךְ נֶאֱמָן

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ יי אֶחָד.

(In a whisper:)

ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד.

וְאֶהְבֵּת את יי אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לֵבְךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל מַאֲדְךָ
וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מִצְוֶה הַיּוֹם עַל לֵבְךָ וְשִׁנְתָּם
לִבְנֶיךָ וְדִבַּרְתָּ בָּם בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלִכְתְּךָ בְּדֶרֶךְ וּבְשִׁכְבְּךָ
וּבְקוּמָךְ וּקְשַׁרְתָּם לְאוֹת עַל יָדְךָ וְהָיוּ לְטֶטֶפֶת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ
וּכְתַבְתָּם עַל מְזוֹזֹת בֵּיתְךָ וּבְשַׁעְרֶיךָ.

וְהָיָה אִם־שָׁמַע תִּשְׁמְעוּ אֵל מִצְוֹתֵי אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מִצְוֶה אֶתְכֶם
הַיּוֹם לֹא־הִבֵּה את יי אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וּלְעַבְדוֹ בְּכָל לֵבְכֶם וּבְכָל
נַפְשְׁכֶם. וְנִתְּתִי מִטֶּר אֲרָצְכֶם בְּעֵתוֹ יוֹרָה וּמִלְקוֹשׁ וְאִסְפַּת דִּגְנוֹךְ

ותירשך ויצהרך. ונתתי עשב בשדה לבהמתך ואכלת ושבעת
השמרו לכם פני יפתח לבבכם וסרתם ועבדתם אלהים
אחרים והשתחויתם להם. וחרה אפי יי בכם ועצר את השמים
ולא יהיה מטר והאדמה לא תתן את יכולה ואבדתם מהרה
מעל הארץ הטבה אשר יי נתן לכם. ושמתם את דברי אלה
על לבבכם ועל נפשכם וקשרתם אתם לאות על ידכם והיו
לטוטפת בין עיניכם. ולמדתם אתם את בניהם לדבר בם
בשבתך בביתך ובלכתך בדרך ובשכבך ובקומך. וכתבתם על
מזוזות ביתך ובשעריך.

למען ירבו ימיכם וימי בניהם על האדמה אשר נשבע יי
לאבותיכם לתת להם כימי השמים על הארץ.

ויאמר יי אל משה לאמר. דבר אל בני ישראל ואמרת
אלהם ועשו להם ציצת על כנפי בגדיהם לדרתם ונתנו על
ציצת הכנף פתיל תכלת. והיה לכם לציצת וראיתם אתו
וזכרתם את כל מצות יי ועשיתם אתם, ולא תתורו אחרי
לבבכם ואחרי עיניכם אשר אתם זנים אחריהם. למען תזכרו
ועשיתם את כל מצותי והייתם קדשים לאלהיכם. אני יי
אלהיכם אשר הוצאתי אתכם מארץ מצרים להיות לכם
לאלהים אני יי אלהיכם —

אמת ואמונה כל־זאת וקים עלינו כי הוא יי אלהינו ואין
זולתו ואנחנו ישראל עמו הפודנו מיד מלכים מלכנו הגואלנו
מכף כל העריצים האל הנפרע לנו מצרינו והמשלם גמול
לכל איבי נפשנו העשה גדלות עד אין חקר ונפלאות עד־אין
מספר. השם נפשנו בחיים ולא נתן למוט רגלנו המדריכנו על
במות איביו וירם קרנו על כל־שנאינו. העשה לנו נסים
ונקמה בפרעה אותות ומופתים באדמת בני חם. המכה
בעברתו כל־בכורי מצרים ויוצא את־עמו ישראל מתוכם
לחרות עולם. המעביר בניו בין גזרי ים סוף את רודפיהם
ואת שונאיהם בתהומות טבע. וראו בניו גבורתו שבחו והודו
לשמו ומלכותו ברצון קבלו עליהם משה ובני ישראל לה ענו
שירה בשמחה רבה ואמרו כלם.

מי כמכה באלם יי מי כמכה נאדר בקדש נורא תהלת עשה
פלא. מלכותך ראו בניך בוקע ים לפני משה זה אלי ענו
ואמרו יי ימלך לעלם ועד.

ונאמר. כי-פדה יי את יעקב וגאלו מיד חזק ממנו, ברוך
אתה יי גאל ישראל.

השכיבנו יי אלהינו לשלום והעמידנו מלכנו לחיים ופרוש
עלינו סבת שלומך ותקננו בעצה טובה מלפניך והושיענו
למען שמך והגן בעדנו והסר מעלינו אויב דבר וחרב ורעב
ויגון והסר שטן מלפנינו ומאחרינו ובצל כנפיה תסתירנו כי
אל שומרנו ומצילנו אתה כי אל מלך חנון ורחום אתה
ושמור צאתנו ובואנו לחיים ולשלום מעתה ועד עולם. ברוך
אתה יי שומר עמו ישראל לעד.

ברוך יי לעולם אמן ואמן ברוך יי מציון שכן ירושלים
הללויה ברוך יי אלהים אלהי ישראל עשה נפלאות לבדו,
וברוך שם כבודו לעולם וימלא כבודו את כל הארץ אמן
ואמן. יהי כבוד יי לעולם ישמח יי במעשיו יהי שם יי מברך
מעתה ועד-עולם כי לא יטש יי את-עמו בעבור שמו הגדול כי
הואיל יי לעשות אתכם לו לעם וירא כל העם ויפלו על
פניהם ויאמרו יי הוא האלהים. והיה יי למלך על כל הארץ
ביום ההוא יהיה יי אחד ושמו אחד. יהי חסדך יי עלינו כאשר
יחלנו לך הושיענו יי אלהינו וקבצנו מן הגוים להודות לשם
קדשך להשתבח בתהלתך. כל גוים אשר עשית יבואו
וישתחו ל לפניך אדני ויכבדו לשמך כי-גדול אתה ועשה
נפלאות אתה אלהים לבדך ואנחנו עמך וצאן מרעיתך נודה
לך לעולם לדור ודור נספר תהלתך.

ברוך יי ביום ברוך יי בלילה, ברוך יי בשכבנו ברוך יי
בקומנו, כי בדרך נפשות החיים והמתים אשר בינו נפש כל
חי ורוח כל בשר איש. בדרך אפקיד רוחי פדיתך אותי יי אל
אמת. אלהינו שבשמים יחד שמך וקיים מלכותך תמיד ומלוך
עלינו לעולם ועד.

יִרְאוּ עֵינֵינוּ וְיִשְׁמַח לִבֵּנוּ וְתִגַּל נַפְשֵׁנוּ בִּישׁוּעַתְךָ בְּאַמַּת
בְּאִמֵּר לְצִיּוֹן מֶלֶךְ אֱלֹהֶיהָ. יְיָ מֶלֶךְ, יְיָ מֶלֶךְ, יְיָ מֶלֶךְ לְעוֹלָם
וָעֶד. כִּי הַמַּלְכוּת שֶׁלְּךָ הִיא וְלְעוֹלָמִי עַד תִּמְלֹךְ בְּכָבוֹד כִּי אֵין
לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ אֶלָּא אַתָּה בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּכָבוֹד תִּמִּיד וּמֶלֶךְ
עַלֵּינוּ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד וְעַל כָּל מַעֲשָׂיו.

The חנוּ:

יִתְגַּדֵּל וְיִתְקַדֵּשׁ שְׁמָה רַבָּא, בְּעֶלְמָא דִּי בְּרָא כְרַעוּתָהּ וְיִמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתָהּ,
בְּחַיִּיכוּן וּבְיוֹמִיכוּן וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּעֶזְלָא וּבְזִמְן קָרִיב וְאִמְרוּ
אָמֵן.

יְהֵא שְׁמָה רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלַם וּלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמֵיָא.
יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרוֹמֵם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא וְיִתְהַדָּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלָּל
שְׁמָה דְקֻדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא. לְעֵלָא מִן כָּל בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁירְתָּא תִּשְׁבַּחְתָּא
וְנִחַמְתָּא דְאִמְרֵין בְּעֶלְמָא וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן.

שְׁמוֹנֶה עָשָׂר *Shemoneh Esreh*:

יְיָ שְׁפָתַי תִּפְתָּח, וּפִי יִגִּיד תְּהִלָּתְךָ.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹרָהִם אֱלֹהֵי
יִצְחָק וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב, הָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא, אֵל עֲלִיּוֹן,
גּוֹמֵל חֲסִדִּים טוֹבִים, וְקוֹנֵה הַכָּל וְזוֹכֵר חֲסִדֵי אֲבוֹת, וּמְבִיא
גּוֹאֵל לִבְנֵי בְנֵיהֶם לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ בְּאַהֲבָה.

מֶלֶךְ עוֹזֵר וּמוֹשִׁיעַ וּמַגֵּן: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ מַגֵּן אֲבֹרָהִם:

אַתָּה גִּבּוֹר, לְעוֹלָם אֲדֹנֵי, מַחֲיֶה מֵתִים אַתָּה, רַב לְהוֹשִׁיעַ.
מְשִׁיב הָרוּחַ וּמוֹרִיד הַגֶּשֶׁם

מְכַלְכֵּל חַיִּים בְּחֶסֶד מַחֲיֶה מֵתִים בְּרַחֲמִים רַבִּים, סוֹמֵךְ
נוֹפְלִים וְרוֹפֵא חוֹלִים, וּמַתִּיר אֲסוּרִים, וּמְקִים אֲמוּנָתוֹ לִישְׁנֵי
עָפָר. מִי כְמוֹךָ בְּעַל גְּבוּרוֹת, וּמִי דוֹמֶה לָךְ, מֶלֶךְ מִמִּית וּמַחֲיֶה
וּמַצְמִיחַ יְשׁוּעָה:

וְנֹאמֵן אַתָּה לְהַחְיֹת מֵתִים: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ מַחֲיֶה הַמֵּתִים:

אַתָּה קָדוֹשׁ וְשִׁמְךָ קָדוֹשׁ. וְקָדוֹשִׁים בְּכָל־יּוֹם יִהְיֶה לְךָ סֵלָה:
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ, הָאֵל הַקָּדוֹשׁ:

אַתָּה חוֹנֵן לְאָדָם דַּעַת, וּמַלְמֵד לְאָנוּשׁ בִּינָה.

(אתה חוננתנו למדע תורתך, ותלמדנו לעשות חקי רצונך, ותברל יי אלהינו, בין קדש לחול, בין אור לחשך בין ישראל לעמים, בין יום השביעי לששת ימי המעשה. אבינו מלכנו החל עלינו הימים הבאים לקראתנו לשלום, חשוכים מכל חטא, ומנקים מכל עון, ומדבקים ביראתך)

(ו) חננו מאתך דעה בינה והשכל. ברוך אתה, יי חונן הדעת.

השיבנו אבינו לתורתך, וקרבו מלכנו לעבודתך, והחזירנו בתשובה שלמה לפניך. ברוך אתה, יי הרוצה בתשובה.

סלח לנו אבינו כי חטאנו, מחל לנו מלכנו כי פשענו, כי מוחל וסולח אתה. ברוך אתה, יי חונן המרבה לסלוח.

ראה נא בענינו וריבה ריבנו, וגאלנו מהרה למען שמך, כי גואל חזק אתה. ברוך אתה יי גואל ישראל.

רפאנו יי ונרפא, הושיענו ונושעה, כי תהלתנו אתה, והעלה רפואה שלמה לכל מכותינו, כי אל מלך רופא נאמן ורחמן אתה. ברוך אתה יי, רופא חולי עמו ישראל.

ברך עלינו, יי אלהינו, את השנה הזאת ואת כל מיני תבואתה לטובה, ותן טל ומטר לברכה על כל פני האדמה, ושבענו מטובך וברך שנתנו בשנים הטובות. ברוך אתה, יי, מברך השנים.

תקע בשופר גדול לחרותנו, ושא נס לקבץ גליותינו, וקבצנו יחד מארבע כנפות הארץ. ברוך אתה, יי, מקבץ נדחי עמו ישראל.

השיבה שופטינו בבראשונה, ויעצינו בבתחלה, והסר ממנו יגון ואנחה, ומלוח עלינו אתה יי לברך בחסד וברחמים וצדקנו במשפט. ברוך אתה, יי, מלך אוהב צדקה ומשפט.

ולמלשינים אל-תהי תקנה, וכל הרשעה ברגע תאבד, וכל אויבך מהרה יכרתו, והזדים מהרה תעקר ותשבר ותמגר ומכניע במהרה בימינו. ברוך אתה, יי, שובר אויבים ומכניע ידים.

על־הַצַּדִּיקִים וְעַל הַחֲסִידִים וְעַל זִקְנֵי עַמָּךְ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְעַל פְּלִיטַת סוֹפְרֵיהֶם, וְעַל גְּרֵי הַצָּרָק וְעַל־יָנוּ, יְהִמוּ נָא רַחֲמֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, וְתֵן שָׂכָר טוֹב לְכָל־הַבוֹטָחִים בְּשִׁמְךָ בְּאַמֶּת, וְשִׁים חֻלְקָנוּ עִמָּהֶם לַעֲוֹלָם וְלֹא נִבּוֹשׁ, כִּי בָּךְ בְּטַחֲנוּ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ, מִשְׁעֵן וּמִבְטָח לַצַּדִּיקִים.

וְלִירוּשָׁלַיִם עִירְךָ בְּרַחֲמִים תָּשׁוּב וְתִשְׁכּוֹן בְּתוֹכָהּ כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ, וּבִגְּזַת אוֹתָהּ בְּקִרְבֵּנוּ בְּיָמֵינוּ עוֹלָם, וְכִסֶּה דָוָד מִהֶרָה לְתוֹכָהּ תָּכִין. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ, בּוֹנֵה יְרוּשָׁלַיִם.

אֶת־צֶמַח דָּוִד עֲבַדְךָ מִהֶרָה תַּצְמִיחַ, וְקִרְנוֹ תִּרְוֶם בִּישׁוּעָתְךָ, כִּי לִישׁוּעָתְךָ קוִינֵנו כָּל־הַיּוֹם. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ, מַצְמִיחַ קֶרֶן יְשׁוּעָה.

שְׁמַע קוֹלֵנוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, חוּס וְרַחֵם עָלֵינוּ, וְקַבֵּל בְּרַחֲמִים וּבִרְצוֹן אֶת תַּפְלָתֵנוּ, כִּי אֵל שׁוֹמֵעַ תַּפְלוֹת וְתַחֲנוּנִים אַתָּה. וּמִלִּפְנֵי מַלְכֵנוּ רִיקָם אֶל־תְּשִׁיבֵנוּ. כִּי אַתָּה שׁוֹמֵעַ תַּפְלַת עַמָּךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרַחֲמִים. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ, שׁוֹמֵעַ תַּפְלָה.

רָצָה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּעַמָּךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבְתַפְלָתָם, וְהִשָּׁב אֶת הָעֲבוּדָה לְדָבִיר בֵּיתְךָ, וְאֲשֵׁי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְתַפְלָתָם בְּאַהֲבָה תִּקְבֹּל בִּרְצוֹן, וְתִהְיֶה לְרְצוֹן תָּמִיד עֲבוּדַת יִשְׂרָאֵל עִמָּךְ.

וְתַחֲוִינָה עֵינֵינוּ בְּשׁוֹבְךָ לְצִיּוֹן בְּרַחֲמִים: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ, הַמַּחְזִיר שְׂכִינָתוֹ לְצִיּוֹן.

מוֹדִים אֲנַחְנוּ לָךְ שְׂאֵתָה הוּא יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ לַעֲוֹלָם וָעֶד, צוּר חַיֵּינוּ מִגֵּן יִשְׁעֵנוּ אַתָּה הוּא לְדָר וָדָר, נוֹדָה לָךְ וְנִסְפָּר תִּהְלָתְךָ, עַל־חַיֵּינוּ הַמְּסוּרִים בְּיָדְךָ, וְעַל נִשְׁמוֹתֵינוּ הַפְּקוּדוֹת לָךְ, וְעַל־נִסִּיךָ שְׂבָכ־לְיוֹם עִמָּנוּ וְעַל גְּפִלְאוֹתֶיךָ וְטוֹבוֹתֶיךָ שְׂבָכ־לַעֲת, עָרֵב וּבָקָר וְצִהָרִים. הַטּוֹב, כִּי לֹא כָּלוּ רַחֲמֶיךָ. וְהַמְּרַחֵם, כִּי לֹא תִמוּ חֲסָדֶיךָ, מַעֲוֹלָם קוִינֵנו לָךְ.

עַל־הַנִּסִּים וְעַל־הַפְּרָקָן וְעַל־הַגְּבוּרוֹת וְעַל־הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת וְעַל־הַמִּלְחָמוֹת שְׁעָשִׂיתָ לְאֲבוֹתֵינוּ בְּיָמִים הָהֵם בְּזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה.

בִּימֵי מִרְדְּכַי וְאַסְתֵּר בְּשׁוֹשֵׁן הַבִּירָה בְּשִׁעְמֵד עָלֵיהֶם הָמָן הָרָשָׁע בִּקֵּשׁ לְהַשְׁמִיד לְהָרֵג וּלְאַבֵּד אֶת־כָּל־הַיְּהוּדִים מִנֶּעַר וְעַד זָקֵן טַף וְנָשִׁים בְּיוֹם אֶחָד בְּשָׁלוֹשָׁה עָשָׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ שְׁנִים־

עֲשֵׂה הוּא־חֹדֶשׁ אֶדָר וּשְׁלָלָם לְבוֹז. וְאַתָּה בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ הַרְבִּים
הִפְרַת אֶת־עֲצָתוֹ וְקִלְקַלְתָּ אֶת־מַחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ וְהִשְׁבוֹתָ גְּמוּלוֹ
בְּרֹאשׁוֹ וְתָלוּ אֹתוֹ וְאֶת־בְּנָיו עַל־הָעֵץ.

וְעַל־כָּל־מִשְׁפָּחָה וְיִתְרוֹמֵם שְׁמֶךָ מִלְּכֵנוּ תָּמִיד לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.
וְכָל הַחַיִּים יוֹדוּךָ סֶלָה, וַיְהִלְלוּ אֶת שְׁמֶךָ בְּאַמֶּת הָאֵל
יִשְׁוּעָתָנוּ וְעִזְרָתָנוּ סֶלָה: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, הַטּוֹב שְׁמֶךָ וְלֶךָ נָאֵה
לְהוֹדוֹת:

שְׁלוֹם רַב עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל עִמָּךְ תָּשִׁים לְעוֹלָם, כִּי אַתָּה הוּא מֶלֶךְ
אֲדוֹן לְכָל הַשָּׁלוֹם, וְטוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ לְבָרֵךְ אֶת עַמָּךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכָל
עֵת וּבְכָל שָׁעָה בְּשִׁלּוֹמָךְ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, הַמְּבָרֵךְ אֶת עַמּוֹ
יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשָׁלוֹם:

אֱלֹהֵי, נִצּוֹר לְשׁוֹנֵי מִרְעָה, וּשְׁפָתֵי מַדְבַּר מִרְמָה, וְלִמְקַלְלֵי
נִפְשֵׁי תִדּוּם, וְנִפְשֵׁי כַּעֲפָר לְכָל תְּהִיָּה. פָּתַח לִבִּי בְּתוֹרָתְךָ,
וּבְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ תִּרְדּוּךָ נִפְשֵׁי. וְכָל־הַחוֹשָׁבִים עָלַי רָעָה, מִהֲרָה הִפֵּר
עֲצָתָם וְקִלְקַל מַחֲשַׁבְתָּם. עֲשֵׂה לִמְעַן שְׁמֶךָ, עֲשֵׂה לִמְעַן יְמִינְךָ,
עֲשֵׂה לִמְעַן קְדוּשָׁתְךָ, עֲשֵׂה לִמְעַן תוֹרָתְךָ, לִמְעַן יִחַלְצוּן
יְרֵידֶיךָ, הוֹשִׁיעָה יְמִינְךָ וְעֲנֵנִי. יִהְיוּ לְרִצּוֹן אֲמָרֵי פִי, וְהִגִּיוֹן לִבִּי
לְפָנֶיךָ, יי צוּרִי וְגֹאֲלִי. עוֹשֵׂה שָׁלוֹם בְּמִרוֹמָיו, הוּא יַעֲשֵׂה
שָׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ, וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

יְהִי רִצּוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שִׁיבֵנָה בֵּית־הַמִּקְדָּשׁ
בְּמַהֲרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ, וְתֵן חֵלְקֵנוּ בְּתוֹרָתְךָ וְשֵׁם נַעֲבֹדְךָ בִּירְאָה כִּימֵי עוֹלָם
וּבְשָׁנִים קְדֻמוֹנִיּוֹת, וְעֲרֹכָה לֵי מִנְחַת יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלַיִם כִּימֵי עוֹלָם
וּבְשָׁנִים קְדֻמוֹנִיּוֹת:

The Chon:

יִתְגַּדֵּל וְיִתְקַדֵּשׁ שְׁמֶךָ רַבָּא, בְּעֶלְמָא דִּי בְּרָא כְּרַעוּתָהּ וַיְמַלִּיךְ מַלְכוּתָהּ,
בְּחַיִּיכוֹן וּבִיּוֹמִיכוֹן וּבְחַיִּי רַבֵּל בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּעֶגְלָא וּבְזֶמֶן קָרִיב וְאָמְרוּ
אָמֵן:

יְהִי שְׁמֶה רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלְמָא לְעָלְמָא עָלְמָא.
יִתְבָּרַךְ וַיִּשְׁתַּבַּח וַיִּתְפָּאֵר וַיִּתְרוֹמֵם וַיִּתְנַשֵּׂא, וַיִּתְהַדָּר וַיִּתְעַלֶּה וַיִּתְהַלָּל
שְׁמֶה דְּקֻדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא. לְעֵלְא מִן כָּל־בְּרַבְרָתָא וְשִׁירָתָא תִּשְׁבַּחְתָּא
וְנִחַמְתָּא דְּאֲמִידָן בְּעֶלְמָא וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:
תִּתְקַבַּל צְלוּתָהּ וּבְעוּתָהּ דְּכָל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל קְדָם אֲבוּהוֹן דִּי בְּשִׁמְיָא
וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:

יֵהָא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמַיָא, וְחַיִּים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:
עוֹשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרוֹמָיו, הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ, וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמְרוּ
אָמֵן:

בְּרִכּוֹת לְקִרְיַאת הַמְּגִלָּה

Before reading the Megillah, the Reader recites:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו
וַצַּנֵּנוּ עַל מִקְרָא מְגִלָּה.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ
בְּיָמִים הָהֵם בְּזֵמַן הַזֶּה.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיָּמָנוּ
וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֵמַן הַזֶּה.

[The Megillah is Read]

After the reading of the Megillah, say:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הָרַב אֶת רִיבֵנוּ וְהִדָּן
אֶת דִּינֵנוּ וְהִנּוּקָם אֶת נַקְמָתָנוּ וְהִנְפָּרַע לָנוּ מִצָּרֵינוּ וְהַמְשִׁלָּם
גָּמוּל לְכָל אֹיְבֵי נַפְשָׁנוּ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ, הַנּוֹפָרַע לַעֲמֹו יִשְׂרָאֵל
מִכָּל צָרֵיהֶם הָאֵל הַמוֹשִׁיעַ.

At Purim morning services, omit the following paragraph:

אֲשֶׁר הֵנִיא עֲצַת גּוֹיִם וַיִּפֹּר מַחֲשָׁבוֹת עֲרוֹמִים.
בְּקוֹם עָלֵינוּ אָדָם רָשָׁע נֶצַח זָדוֹן מִזֵּרַע עֲמָלָק.
גָּאָה בַּעֲשָׂרוֹ וְכָרָה לוֹ בּוֹר וַגְדִּלְתוּ יִקְשֶׁה לוֹ לָכֶד.
דָּמָה בְּנַפְשׁוֹ לְלִכּוֹד וְנִלְכָּד בְּקֶשׁ לְהַשְׁמִיד וְנִשְׁמַד מִהֲרָה.
הָמָן הוֹדִיעַ אֵיבַת אֲבוֹתָיו וְעוֹרֵר שִׁנְאָת אַחִים לְבָנִים.
וְלֹא-זָכַר רַחֲמֵי שְׂאוֹל כִּי בַחֲמִלְתּוֹ עַל אֶגֶג נוֹלַד אוֹיֵב.
זָמַם רָשָׁע לְהַכְרִית צְדִיק וְנִלְכָּד טָמֵא בְיָדֵי טָהוֹר.
חֲסִד גָּבַר עַל-שִׁגְגַת אֵב וְרָשָׁע הוֹסִיף חֲטָא עַל חֲטָאָיו.
טָמֵן בְּלִבּוֹ מַחֲשָׁבוֹת עֲרוֹמָיו וַיִּתְּמַכֵּר לַעֲשׂוֹת רָעָה.
יָדוֹ שָׁלַח בְּקִדּוּשֵׁי אֵל, בִּסְפוֹ נָתַן לְהַכְרִית זָכָרָם.
כָּרְאוֹת מְרֹדְכִי כִי-יֵצֵא קֶצֶף וְדָתִי הָמָן נִתְּנוּ בְּשׁוֹשׁן.
לִבֶּשׂ שֵׁק וְקִשָּׁר מִסְפֵּד וְגִזֵּר צוּם וַיֵּשֶׁב עַל הָאִפֶּר.
מִי זֶה יַעֲמֹוד לְכַפֵּר שִׁגְגָה וְלִמְחוֹל חֲטָאת עוֹן אֲבוֹתֵינוּ.

נַץ פָּרַח מְלוּלָב הֵן הִדְסָה עֲמֻדָה לְעוֹרֵר יְשָׁנִים.
 סְרִיסְיָה הִבְהִילוּ לְהֵמֵן לְהַשְׁקוֹתוֹ יַיִן חֲמַת תַּנְיָנִים.
 עֲמֵד בְּעֶשְׂרוֹ וְנָפַל בְּרָשְׁעוֹ עֲשֵׂה לוֹ עֵץ וְנִתְּלָה עָלָיו.
 פִּיֵּיהֶם פָּתְחוּ כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֶל, כִּי פוֹר הֵמֵן נִהְפֶּךְ לְפוֹרְנוֹ.
 צְדִיק נִחְלָץ מִיָּד רָשָׁע, אוֹיֵב נָתַן תַּחַת נַפְשׁוֹ.
 קִיְּמוּ עֲלֵיהֶם לַעֲשׂוֹת פּוֹרִים וּלְשַׁמַּח בְּכָל שָׁנָה וּשְׁנָה.
 רְאִיתָ אֶת תַּפְּלַת מֶרְדֵּכַי וְאַסְתֵּר הֵמֵן וּבְנָיו עַל־הָעֵץ תְּלִיתָ.

הַאֵל הַמוֹשִׁיעַ *On Purim morning say this following*

שׁוֹשְׁנַת יַעֲקֹב צִהְלָה וּשְׁמַחָה בְּרֵאוֹתֶם יַחַד תִּכְלַת מֶרְדֵּכַי
 תְּשׁוּעָתֶם הָיִיתָ לְנִצָּח וְתִקְוַתֶם בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר. לְהוֹדִיעַ שְׁפָל
 קוֹיָה לֹא יִבְשׁוּ וְלֹא יִכְלָמוּ לְנִצָּח כָּל הַחוֹסִים בָּךְ. אֲרוֹר הֵמֵן
 אֲשֶׁר בִּקֵּשׁ לְאַבְדִּי, בְּרוּךְ מֶרְדֵּכַי הַיְּהוּדִי, אֲרוּרָה וְרֹשׁ אֵשֶׁת
 מִפְּחִידִי, בְּרוּכָה אֲסְתֵּר בַּעֲדִי. וְגַם חֲרֻבוֹנָה זְכוֹר לְטוֹב.

מוֹצָאֵי שַׁבָּת *On Saturday night*

וַיְהִי נָעַם יְיָ אֱלֹהֵנוּ עָלֵינוּ, וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו כּוֹנֵנָה עָלֵינוּ,
 וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו כּוֹנֵנָהוּ.

יֵשֶׁב בְּסֶתֶר עָלֵינוּ בְּצֵל שְׂדֵי יִתְלוֹנֵן. אִמֵּר לִי מַחְסִי וּמִצּוֹדֹתִי
 אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹטָח בּוֹ. כִּי הוּא יִצְיֹלָה מִפֶּחַ יְקוֹשׁ מִדְּבַר הוּוֹת,
 בְּאַבְרָתוֹ יִסֹּף לָךְ וְתַחַת כְּנָפָיו תִּחְסֶה, צָנָה וְסַחְרָה אֲמָתוֹ. לֹא
 תִירָא מִפֶּחַד לִילָה מִחָץ יַעוֹף יוֹמָם מִדְּבַר בְּאִפֶּל יִהְיֶה מִקְטֵב
 יִשׁוּד צִהְרִים. יִפֹּל מִצֶּדֶךְ אֶלֶף וּרְבָבָה מִימִנֶּךָ, אֵלֶיךָ לֹא יָגֵשׁ
 רַק בַּעֲיִנֶיךָ תִּבְיֵט וּשְׁלֹמֹת רָשָׁעִים תִּרְאֶה. כִּי־אַתָּה יְיָ מַחְסִי
 עָלֵינוּ שְׁמַת מְעוֹנָה, לֹא תֵאָנָה אֵלֶיךָ רָעָה וְנִגַּע לֹא יִקְרַב
 בְּאַהֲלָה, כִּי מִלֵּאבָיו יֵצֵא לָךְ לְשִׁמְרָה בְּכָל דְּרָכֶיךָ, עַל כַּפִּים
 יִשְׁאוּנֶךָ פֶּן תִּגַּף בְּאֶבֶן רִגְלָה, עַל שַׁחַל נִפְתֹּן תִּדְרֹךְ תִּרְמָס
 כְּפִיר וְתַנִּין. כִּי כִי חֶשֶׁק וְאַפְלָטָהוּ אֲשַׁגְּבֶהוּ כִּי יֵדַע שְׁמִי
 יִקְרָאֵנִי וְאַעֲנֶהוּ, עֲמוּ אֲנֹכִי בְּצָרָה אֲחַלְצֶהוּ וְאֲכַבְּדֶהוּ, אֲרָךְ
 יָמִים אֲשַׁבִּיעֶהוּ וְאַרְאֶהוּ בִישׁוּעָתִי, אֲרָךְ יָמִים אֲשַׁבִּיעֶהוּ
 וְאַרְאֶהוּ בִישׁוּעָתִי.

וְאַתָּה קְדוֹשׁ יוֹשֵׁב תְּהִלַּת יִשְׂרָאֵל וְקָרָא זֶה אֱלֹהֵי וְאָמַר

קדוש קדוש קדוש יי צבאות מלא כל־הארץ כבודו. ומקבלין
 דן מִן־דן ואמרין קדיש בשמי מרומא עלאה בית שכינתה
 קדיש על־ארעא עובד גבורתה קדיש לעלם ולעלמי עלמיא.
 יי צבאות מליא כל ארעא זיו יקרה. ותשאני רוח ואשמע
 אחרי קול רעש גדול ברוך כבוד יי ממקומו. ונטלתני רוחא
 ושמעת בתרי קל זיע סגיא דמשבחין ואמרין. בריך יקרא דיי
 מאתר בית שכינתה. יי ימלך לעלם ועד. יי מלכותה קאם
 לעלם ולעלמי עלמיא. יי אלהי אברהם יצחק וישראל
 אבותינו שמרה־זאת לעולם ליצר מחשבות לבב עמך והכן
 לבכם אליך. והוא רחום וכפר עון ולא־ישחית והרבה להשיב
 אפו ולא יעיר כל־חמתו. כי אתה יי טוב וסלח ורב־חסד לכל־
 קראיך. צדקתך צדק לעולם ותורתך אמת. תתן אמת ליעקב
 חסד לאברהם אשר־נשבעת לאבותינו מימי קדם. ברוך אדני
 יום יום יעמס לנו האל ישועתנו סלה. יי צבאות עמנו משגב־
 לנו אלהי יעקב סלה. יי צבאות אשרי אדם בטח בך. יי
 הושיעה המלך יעגנו ביום־קראינו. ברוך אלהינו שבראנו
 לכבודו והבדילנו מן־התועים ונתן־לנו תורת אמת וחי עולם
 נטע בתוכנו. הוא יפתח לבנו בתורתו וישם בלבנו אהבתו
 ויראתו ולעשות רצונו ולעבדו בלבב שלם למען לא ניגע
 לריק ולא גלד לבהלה. יהי רצון מלפניך יי אלהינו ואלהי
 אבותינו שגשמר חקיה בעולם הזה ונזכה ונחיה ונראה ונירש
 טובה וברכה לשני ימות המשיח ולחיי העולם הבא. למען
 יזמרה כבוד ולא ידם יי אלהי לעולם אודך. ברוך הגבר אשר
 יבטח ביי והיה יי מבטחו. בטחו ביי עדי־עד כי ביה יי צור
 עולמים. ויבטחו בך יודעי שמך פי לא־עזבת דרשך יי. יי חפץ
 למען צדקו וגדיל תורה ויאדיר.

The Hallel:

יתגדל ויתקדש שמיא רבא. בעלמא די ברא כרעותה וימליך
 מלכותה, בחייכון וביומיכון ובחיי דכל־בית־ישראל בעגלא ובזמן קריב
 ואמרו אמן.

יהא שמה רבא מברך לעלם לעלמי עלמיא.

יתברך וישתבח ויתפאר ויתרומם ויתנשא ויתגדר ויתעלה ויתהלל

שמה דקדשא בריך הוא. לעלא מן כל-ברכתא ושירתא תשבחתא
ונחמתא דאמירן בעלמא ואמרו אמן:
יהא שלמא רבא מן שמיא, וחיים עלינו ועל כל ישראל ואמרו:
עושה שלום במרומיו, הוא יעשה שלום עלינו, ועל כל ישראל ואמרו:
אמן:

עלינו לשבח לארון הכל, לתת גדלה ליוצר בראשית, שלא
עשנו כגויי הארצות, ולא שמנו כמשפחות האדמה, שלא
שם חלקנו בהם וגורלנו בכל המונם, ואנחנו כורעים
ומשתחוים לפני מלך מלכי המלכים הקדוש ברוך הוא,
שהוא נוטה שמים ויוסד ארץ, ומושב יקרו בשמים ממעל,
ושכינת עוז בגבהי מרומים הוא אלהינו אין עוד. אמת מלכנו
אפס זולתו, בכתוב בתורתו, וידעת היום והשבות אל-לבבך
כי יי הוא האלהים בשמים ממעל ועל-הארץ מתחת, אין עוד:
על כן נקנה לה יי אלהינו לראות מהרה בתפארת עזה,
להעביר גלולים מן הארץ, והאלילים ברות יברתון לתקן
עולם במלכות שדי. וכל-בני בשר יקראו בשמך, להפנות
אליך כל-רשעי-ארץ. יכירו וידעו כל-יושבי תבל, כי לה
תכרע כל-בך, תשבע כל-לשון. לפניך יי אלהינו יכרעו
ויפלו, ולכבוד שמך יקר יתנו, ויקבלו כלם את-עול מלכותך,
ותמלוך עליהם מהרה לעולם ועד, כי המלכות שלך היא,
ולעולמי עד תמלוך בכבוד, בכתוב בתורתך, יי ימלך לעלם
ועד: ונאמר והיה יי למלך על-כל-הארץ, ביום ההוא יהיה יי
אחד ושמו אחד:

Mourner's קריש:

יתגדל ויתקדש שמייה רבא. בעלמא די ברא כרעותה וימליך
מלכותה, בחייכון וביומיכון ובחיי דכל-בית-ישראל בעגלא ובזמן קריב
ואמרו אמן.

יהא שמייה רבא מכרך לעלם לעלמי עלמא
יתברך וישתבח ויתפאר ויתרומם ויתנשא, ויתהדר ויתעלה ויתהלל
שמה דקדשא בריך הוא. לעלא מן כל-ברכתא ושירתא תשבחתא
ונחמתא דאמירן בעלמא ואמרו אמן:
יהא שלמא רבא מן שמיא, וחיים עלינו ועל כל ישראל ואמרו אמן:
עושה שלום במרומיו, הוא יעשה שלום עלינו, ועל כל ישראל ואמרו:
אמן: